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**VOL. 39.**

**THE SISTERS. BY GEORG EBERS.**

**IN TWO VOLUMES. — VOL. I.**

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# THE SISTERS.

A ROMANCE.

BY

GEORG EBERS,

AUTHOR OF "AN EGYPTIAN PRINCESS," "UARDA," ETC.

FROM THE GERMAN BY

CLARA BELL.

IN TWO VOLUMES.—VOL. I.

*Copyright Edition.*

LEIPZIG 1880

BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ.

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DEDICATION  
TO  
HERR EDUARD VON HALLBERGER.

Allow me, my dear friend, to dedicate these pages to you. I present them to you at the close of a period of twenty years during which a warm and fast friendship has subsisted between us, unbroken by any disagreement. Four of my works have first seen the light under your care and have wandered all over the world under the protection of your name. This, my fifth book, I desire to make especially your own; it was partly written in your beautiful home at Tutzing, under your hospitable roof, and I desire to prove to you by some visible token that I know how to value your affection and friendship and the many happy hours we have passed together, refreshing and encouraging each other by a full and perfect interchange of thought and sentiment.

Faithfully your friend

G. EBERS.



## PREFACE.

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By a marvellous combination of circumstances a number of fragments of the Royal Archives of Memphis have been preserved from destruction with the rest, containing petitions written on papyrus in the Greek language; these were composed by a recluse of Macedonian birth, living in the Serapeum, in behalf of two sisters, twins, who served the god as "Pourers out of the libations."

At a first glance these petitions seem scarcely worthy of serious consideration; but a closer study of their contents shows us that we possess in them documents of the greatest value in the history of manners. They prove that the great Monastic Idea—which under the influence of Christianity grew to be of such vast moral and historical significance—first struck root in one of the centres of heathen religious practices; besides affording us a quite unexpected insight

into the internal life of the temple of Serapis, whose ruined walls have, in our own day, been recovered from the sand of the desert by the indefatigable industry of the French Egyptologist Monsieur Mariette.

I have been so fortunate as to visit this spot and to search through every part of it, and the petitions I speak of have been familiar to me for years. When, however, quite recently, one of my pupils undertook to study more particularly one of these documents—preserved in the Royal Library at Dresden—I myself reinvestigated it also, and this study impressed on my fancy a vivid picture of the Serapeum under Ptolemy Philometor; the outlines became clear and firm, and acquired colour, and it is this picture which I have endeavoured to set before the reader, so far as words admit, in the following pages.

I did not indeed select for my hero the recluse, nor for my heroines the twins who are spoken of in the petitions, but others who might have lived at a somewhat earlier date under similar conditions; for it is proved by the papyrus that it was not once only and by ac-

cident that twins were engaged in serving in the temple of Serapis, but that, on the contrary, pair after pair of sisters succeeded each other in the office of pouring out libations.

I have not invested Klea and Irene with this function, but have simply placed them as wards of the Serapeum and growing up within its precincts. I selected this alternative partly because the existing sources of knowledge give us very insufficient information as to the duties that might have been required of the twins, partly for other reasons arising out of the plan of my narrative.

Klea and Irene are purely imaginary personages, but on the other hand I have endeavoured, by working from tolerably ample sources, to give a faithful picture of the historical physiognomy of the period in which they live and move, and portraits of the two hostile brothers Ptolemy Philometor and Euergetes II., the latter of whom bore the nickname of Physkon: the Stout. The Eunuch Eulæus and the Roman Publius Cornelius Scipio Nasica, are also historical personages. I chose the latter from among the many young patricians living at

the time, partly on account of the strong aristocratic feeling which he displayed, particularly in his later life, and partly because his nickname of Serapion struck me. This name I account for in my own way, although I am aware that he owed it to his resemblance to a person of inferior rank.

For the farther enlightenment of the reader who is not familiar with this period of Egyptian history I may suggest that Cleopatra, the wife of Ptolemy Philometor—whom I propose to introduce to the reader—must not be confounded with her famous namesake, the beloved of Julius Cæsar and Mark Antony. The name Cleopatra was a very favourite one among the Lagides, and of the queens who bore it she who has become famous through Shakespeare (and more lately through Makart) was the seventh, the sister and wife of Ptolemy XIV. Her tragical death from the bite of a viper or asp did not occur until 134 years later than the date of my narrative, which I have placed 164 years B. C.

At that time Egypt had already been for 169 years subject to the rule of a Greek (Mace-

donian) dynasty, which owed its name as that of the Ptolemies or Lagides to its founder Ptolemy Soter, the son of Lagus. This energetic man, a general under Alexander the Great, when his sovereign—333 B. C.—had conquered the whole Nile Valley, was appointed governor of the new Satrapy; after Alexander's death in 323 B. C., Ptolemy mounted the throne of the Pharaohs, and he and his descendants ruled over Egypt until after the death of the last and most famous of the Cleopatrás, when it was annexed as a province to the Roman Empire.

This is not the place for giving a history of the successive Ptolemies, but I may remark that the assimilating faculty exercised by the Greeks over other nations was potent in Egypt; particularly as the result of the powerful influence of Alexandria, the capital founded by Alexander, which developed with wonderful rapidity to be one of the most splendid centres of Hellenic culture and of Hellenic art and science.

Long before the united rule of the hostile brothers Ptolemy Philometor and Euergetes—whose violent end will be narrated to the reader

of this story—Greek influence was marked in every event and detail of Egyptian life, which had remained almost unaffected by the characteristics of former conquerors—the Hyksos, the Assyrians and the Persians; and, under the Ptolemies, the most inhospitable and exclusive nation of early antiquity threw open her gates to foreigners of every race.

Alexandria was a metropolis even in the modern sense; not merely an emporium of commerce, but a focus where the intellectual and religious wealth of various countries was concentrated and worked up, and transmitted to all the nations that desired them. I have resisted the temptation to lay the scene of my story there, because in Alexandria the Egyptian element was too much overlaid by the Greek, and the too splendid and important scenery and decorations might easily have distracted the reader's attention from the dramatic interest of the persons acting.

At that period of the Hellenic dominion which I have described, the Kings of Egypt were free to command in all that concerned the

internal affairs of their kingdom, but the rapidly-growing power of the Roman Empire enabled her to check the extension of their dominion, just as she chose.

Philometor himself had heartily promoted the immigration of Israelites from Palestine, and under him the important Jewish community in Alexandria acquired an influence almost greater than the Greek; and this not only in the city but in the kingdom and over their Royal Protector, who allowed them to build a temple to Jehovah on the shores of the Nile, and in his own person assisted at the dogmatic discussions of the Israelites educated in the Greek schools of the city. Euergetes II., a highly gifted but vicious and violent man, was, on the contrary, just as inimical to them; he persecuted them cruelly as soon as his brother's death left him sole ruler over Egypt. His hand fell heavily even on the members of the Great Academy—the Museum, as it was called—of Alexandria, though he himself had been devoted to the grave labours of science, and he compelled them to seek a new home. The exiled sons of learning settled in various cities on the shores of the Mediter-

ranean, and thus contributed not a little to the diffusion of the intellectual results of the labours in the Museum.

Aristarchus, the greatest of Philometor's learned contemporaries, has reported for us a conversation in the King's Palace at Memphis. The verses about "the puny child of man," recited by Cleopatra in chapter X., are not genuinely antique; but Friedrich Ritschl—the Aristarchus of our own days, now dead—thought very highly of them and gave them to me, some years ago, with several variations which had been added by an anonymous hand, then still in the land of the living. I have added to the first verse two of these, which, as I learned at the eleventh hour, were composed by Herr H. L. von Held, who is now dead, and of whom farther particulars may be learned from Varnhagen's *biographischen Denkmälen*. Vol. VII. I think the reader will thank me for directing his attention to these charming lines and to the genius displayed in the moral application of the main idea. Verses such as these might very well have been written by Callimachus or some other poet of the circle of

the early members of the Museum of Alexandria.\*

I was also obliged in this narrative to concentrate, in one limited canvas as it were, all the features which were at once the conditions and the characteristics of a great epoch of civilisation, and to give them form and movement by setting the history of some of the men then living before the reader, with its

\* These verses, translated in the text, run as follows :

“Sitzt das kleine Menschenkind  
 , An dem Ocean der Zeit,  
 Schöpft mit seiner kleinen Hand  
 Tropfen aus der Ewigkeit.

“Sitzt das kleine Menschenkind,  
 Sammelt flüsternde Gerüchte,  
 Schreibt sie in ein kleines Buch  
 Und darüber: ‘Weltgeschichte.’ ”

---

“Schöpfe nicht das kleine Menschenkind  
 Tropfen aus dem Ocean der Zeit,  
 Was geschieht, verwehte wie der Wind  
 In den Abgrund öder Ewigkeit.”

---

“Tropfen aus dem Ocean der Zeit  
 Schöpft das Menschenkind mit kleiner Hand,  
 Spiegelt doch dem Lichte zugewandt  
 Sich darin die ganze Ewigkeit.”

complications and its dénouement. All the personages of my story grew up in my imagination from a study of the times in which they lived, but when once I saw them clearly in outline they soon stood before my mind in a more distinct form, like people in a dream; I felt the poet's pleasure in creation, and as I painted them their blood grew warm, their pulses began to beat and their spirit to take wings and stir, each in its appropriate nature. I gave History her due, but the historic figures retired into the background beside the human beings as such; the representatives of an epoch became vehicles for a Human Ideal, holding good for all time; and thus it is that I venture to offer this transcript of a period as really a dramatic romance.

Leipzig, November 13, 1879.

GEORG EBERS.

## THE SISTERS.

### CHAPTER I.

ON the wide, desert plain of the Necropolis of Memphis stands the extensive and stately pile of masonry which constitutes the Greek temple of Serapis; by its side are the smaller sanctuaries of Asclepios, of Anubis and of Astarte, and a row of long, low houses, built of unburnt bricks, stretches away behind them as a troop of beggar children might follow in the train of some splendidly attired king.

The more dazzlingly brilliant the smooth, yellow sandstone walls of the temple appear in the light of the morning sun, the more squalid and mean do the dingy houses look as they crouch in the outskirts. When the winds blow round them and the hot sunbeams fall upon

them, the dust rises from them in clouds as from a dry path swept by the gale. Even the rooms inside are never plastered, and as the bricks are of dried Nile mud mixed with chopped straw, of which the sharp little ends stick out from the wall in every direction, the surface is as disagreeable to touch as it is unpleasing to look at. When they were first built on the ground between the temple itself and the wall which encloses the precincts, and which, on the eastern side, divides the acacia grove of Serapis in half, they were concealed from the votaries visiting the temple by the back wall of a colonnade on the eastern side of the great forecourt; but a portion of this colonnade has now fallen down, and through the breach, part of these modest structures are plainly visible with their doors and windows opening towards the sanctuary--or, to speak more accurately, certain rudely constructed openings for looking out of or for entering by. Where there is a door there is no window, and where a gap in the wall serves for a window, a door is dispensed with; none of the

chambers, however, of this long row of low one-storied buildings communicate with each other.

A narrow and well-trodden path leads through the breach in the wall; the pebbles are thickly strewn with brown dust, and the foot-way leads past quantities of blocks of stone and portions of columns destined for the construction of a new building which seems only to have been intermittent the night before, for mallets and levers lie on and near the various materials. This path leads directly to the little brick houses, and ends at a small closed wooden door so roughly joined and so ill hung that between it and the threshold, which is only raised a few inches above the ground, a fine grey cat contrives to squeeze herself through by putting down her head and rubbing through the dust. As soon as she finds herself once more erect on her four legs she proceeds to clean and smooth her ruffled fur, putting up her back, and glancing with gleaming eyes at the house she has just left, behind which at this moment the sun is rising; blinded by its bright rays she

turns away and goes on with cautious and silent tread into the court of the Temple.

The hovel out of which Pussy has crept is small and barely furnished; it would be perfectly dark too, but that the holes in the roof and the rift in the door admit light into this most squalid room. There is nothing standing against its rough grey walls but a wooden chest, near this a few earthen bowls stand on the ground with a wooden cup and a gracefully wrought jug of pure and shining gold, which looks strangely out of place among such humble accessories. Quite in the background lie two mats of woven bast, each covered with a sheep-skin. These are the beds of the two girls who inhabit the room, one of whom is now sitting on a low stool made of palm branches, and she yawns as she begins to arrange her long and shining brown hair. She is not particularly skilful and even less patient over this not very easy task, and presently, when a fresh tangle checks the horn comb with which she is dressing it, she tosses the comb on to the couch.

She has not pulled it through her hair with any haste nor with much force, but she shuts her eyes so tightly and sets her white teeth so firmly in her red and dewy lip that it might be supposed that she had hurt herself very much.

A shuffling step is now audible outside the door; she opens wide her tawny-hazel eyes, that have a look of gazing on the world in surprise, a smile parts her lips and her whole aspect is as completely changed as that of a butterfly which escapes from the shade into the sunshine where the bright beams are reflected in the metallic lustre of its wings.

A hasty hand knocks at the ill-hung door, so roughly that it trembles on its hinges, and the instant after a wooden trencher is shoved in through the wide chink by which the cat made her escape; on it are a thin round cake of bread and a shallow earthen saucer containing a little olive-oil; there is no more than might perhaps be contained in half an ordinary egg-shell, but it looks fresh and sweet, and shines in clear, golden purity. The girl goes to the

door, pulls in the platter, and, as she measures the allowance with a glance, exclaims half in lament and half in reproach:

“So little! and is that for both of us?”

As she speaks her expressive features have changed again and her flashing eyes are directed towards the door with a glance of as much dismay as though the sun and stars had been suddenly extinguished; and yet her only grief is the smallness of the loaf, which certainly is hardly large enough to stay the hunger of one young creature—and two must share it; what is a mere nothing in one man’s life, to another may be of great consequence and of terrible significance.

The reproachful complaint is heard by the messenger outside the door, for the old woman who shoved in the trencher over the threshold answers quickly but not crossly.

“Nothing more to-day, Irene.”

“It is disgraceful,” cries the girl, her eyes filling with tears, “every day the loaf grows smaller, and if we were sparrows we should not

have enough to satisfy us. You know what is due to us and I will never cease to complain and petition. Serapion shall draw up a fresh address for us, and when the king knows how shamefully we are treated—”

“Aye! when he knows,” interrupted the old woman. “But the cry of the poor is tossed about by many winds before it reaches the king’s ear. I might find a shorter way than that for you and your sister if fasting comes so much amiss to you. Girls with faces like hers and yours, my little Irene, need never come to want.”

“And pray what is my face like?” asked the girl, and her pretty features once more seemed to catch a gleam of sunshine.

“Why, so handsome that you may always venture to show it beside your sister’s; and yesterday, in the procession, the great Roman sitting by the Queen looked as often at her as at Cleopatra herself. If you had been there too he would not have had a glance for the Queen, for you are a pretty thing, as I can tell

you. And there are many girls would sooner hear those words than have a whole loaf—besides you have a mirror I suppose, look in that next time you are hungry."

The old woman's shuffling steps retreated again and the girl snatched up the golden jar, opened the door a little way to let in the daylight and looked at herself in the bright surface; but the curve of the costly vase showed her features all distorted, and she gaily breathed on the hideous travestie that met her eyes, so that it was all blurred out by the moisture. Then she smilingly put down the jar, and opening the chest took from it a small metal mirror into which she looked again and yet again, arranging her shining hair first in one way and then in another; and she only laid it down when she remembered a certain bunch of violets which had attracted her attention when she first woke, and which must have been placed in their saucer of water by her sister some time the day before. Without pausing to consider she took up the softly scented blossoms, dried their green

stems on her dress, took up the mirror again and stuck the flowers in her hair.

How bright her eyes were now, and how contentedly she put out her hand for the loaf. And how fair were the visions that rose before her young fancy as she broke off one piece after another and hastily eat them after slightly moistening them with the fresh oil. Once, at the festival of the New Year, she had had a glimpse into the King's tent, and there she had seen men and women feasting as they reclined on purple cushions. Now she dreamed of tables covered with costly vessels, was served in fancy by boys crowned with flowers, heard the music of flutes and harps and—for she was no more than a child and had such a vigorous young appetite—pictured herself as selecting the daintiest and sweetest morsels out of dishes of solid gold and eating till she was satisfied, aye so perfectly satisfied that the very last mouthful of bread and the very last drop of oil had disappeared.

But so soon as her hand found nothing more

on the empty trencher the bright illusion vanished, and she looked with dismay into the empty oil-cup and at the place where just now the bread had been.

“Ah!” she sighed from the bottom of her heart; then she turned the platter over as though it might be possible to find some more bread and oil on the other side of it, but finally shaking her head she sat looking thoughtfully into her lap; only for a few minutes however, for the door opened and the slim form of her sister Klea appeared, the sister whose meagre rations she had dreamily eaten up, and Klea had been sitting up half the night sewing for her, and then had gone out before sunrise to fetch water from the Well of the Sun for the morning sacrifice at the altar of Serapis.

Klea greeted her sister with a loving glance but without speaking; she seemed too exhausted for words and she wiped the drops from her forehead with the linen veil that covered the back of her head as she seated herself on the lid of the chest. Irene immediately glanced

at the empty trencher, considering whether she had best confess her guilt to the wearied girl and beg for forgiveness, or divert the scolding she had deserved by some jest, as she had often succeeded in doing before. This seemed the easier course and she adopted it at once; she went up to her sister quickly, but not quite unconcernedly, and said with mock gravity:

“Look here, Klea, don’t you notice anything in me? I must look like a crocodile that has eaten a whole hippopotamus, or one of the sacred snakes after it has swallowed a rabbit. Only think when I had eaten my own bread I found yours between my teeth—quite unexpectedly—but now—”

Klea, thus addressed, glanced at the empty platter and interrupted her sister with a low-toned exclamation. “Oh! I was so hungry.”

The words expressed no reproof, only utter exhaustion, and as the young criminal looked at her sister and saw her sitting there, tired and worn out but submitting to the injury that had been done her without a word of complaint, her

heart, easily touched, was filled with compunction and regret. She burst into tears and threw herself on the ground before her, clasping her knees and crying, in a voice broken with sobs:

“Oh Klea! poor, dear Klea, what have I done! but indeed I did not mean any harm. I don’t know how it happened. Whatever I feel prompted to do I do, I can’t help doing it, and it is not till it is done that I begin to know whether it was right or wrong. You sat up and worried yourself for me, and this is how I repay you—I am a bad girl! But you shall not go hungry—no, you shall not.”

“Never mind, never mind,” said the elder, and she stroked her sister’s brown hair with a loving hand.

But as she did so she came upon the violets fastened among the shining tresses. Her lips quivered and her weary expression changed as she touched the flowers and glanced at the empty saucer in which she had carefully placed them the day before. Irene at once perceived the change in her sister’s face, and thinking only

that she was surprised at her pretty adornment, she said gaily: "Do you think the flowers becoming to me?"

Klea's hand was already extended to take the violets out of the brown plaits, for her sister was still kneeling before her, but at this question her arm dropped, and she said more positively and distinctly than she had yet spoken and in a voice, whose sonorous but musical tones were almost masculine and certainly remarkable in a girl:

"The bunch of flowers belongs to me; but keep it till it is faded, by midday, and then return it to me."

"It belongs to you?" repeated the younger girl, raising her eyes in surprise to her sister, for to this hour what had been Klea's had been hers also. "But I always used to take the flowers you brought home; what is there special in these?"

"They are only violets like any other violets," replied Klea colouring deeply. "But the Queen has worn them."

"The Queen!" cried her sister springing to her feet and clasping her hands in astonishment. "She gave you the flowers? And you never told me till now? To be sure when you came home from the procession yesterday you only asked me how my foot was and whether my clothes were whole and then not another mortal word did you utter. Did Cleopatra herself give you this bunch?"

"How should she?" retorted Klea. "One of her escort threw them to me; but drop the subject pray! Give me the water, please, my mouth is parched and I can hardly speak for thirst."

The bright colour dyed her cheeks again as she spoke, but Irene did not observe it, for—delighted to make up for her evil doings by performing some little service—she ran to fetch the water jar; while Klea filled and emptied her wooden bowl she said, gracefully lifting a small foot, to show to her sister :

"Look, the cut is almost healed and I can wear my sandal again. Now I shall tie it on

and go and ask Serapion for some bread for you and perhaps he will give us a few dates. Please loosen the straps for me a little, here, round the ankle, my skin is so thin and tender that a little thing hurts me which you would hardly feel. At midday I will go with you and help fill the jars for the altar, and later in the day I can accompany you in the procession which was postponed from yesterday. If only the Queen and the great foreigner should come again to look on at it! That would be splendid! Now, I am going, and before you have drunk the last bowl of water you shall have some bread, for I will coax the old man so prettily that he can't say 'no.'"

Irene opened the door, and as the broad sunlight fell in it lighted up tints of gold in her chesnut hair, and her sister looking after her could almost fancy that the sunbeams had got entangled with the waving glory round her head. The bunch of violets was the last thing she took note of as Irene went out into the open air; then she was alone and she shook her

head gently as she said to herself: "I give up everything to her and what I have left she takes from me. Three times have I met the Roman, yesterday he gave me the violets, and I did want to keep those for myself—and now—" As she spoke she clasped the bowl she still held in her hand closely to her and her lips trembled pitifully, but only for an instant; she drew herself up and said firmly: "But it is all as it should be."

Then she was silent; she set down the water jar on the chest by her side, passed the back of her hand across her forehead as if her head were aching, then, as she sat gazing down dreamily into her lap, her weary head presently fell on her shoulder and she was asleep.

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## CHAPTER II.

THE low brick building of which the sisters' room formed a part, was called the Pastophorium, and it was occupied also by other persons attached to the service of the temple, and by numbers of pilgrims. These assembled here from all parts of Egypt, and were glad to pass a night under the protection of the sanctuary.

Irene, when she quitted her sister, went past many doors—which had been thrown open after sunrise—hastily returning the greetings of many strange as well as familiar faces, for all glanced after her kindly as though to see her thus early were an omen of happy augury, and she soon reached an outbuilding adjoining the northern end of the Pastophorium; here there was no door, but at the level of about a man's height from the ground there were six unclosed windows opening on the road. From the first of

these the pale and much wrinkled face of an old man looked down on the girl as she approached. She shouted up to him in cheerful accents the greeting familiar to the Hellenes "Rejoice!" But he, without moving his lips, gravely and significantly signed to her with his lean hand and with a glance from his small, fixed and expressionless eyes that she should wait, and then handed out to her a wooden trencher on which lay a few dates and half a cake of bread.

"For the altar of the god?" asked the girl. The old man nodded assent, and Irene went on with her small load, with the assurance of a person who knows exactly what is required of her; but after going a few steps and before she had reached the last of the six windows she paused, for she plainly heard voices and steps, and presently, at the end of the Pastophorium towards which she was proceeding and which opened into a small grove of acacias dedicated to Serapis—which was of much greater extent outside the enclosing wall—appeared a little

group of men whose appearance attracted her attention; but she was afraid to go on towards the strangers, so, leaning close up to the wall of the houses, she awaited their departure, listening the while to what they were saying.

In front of these early visitors to the temple walked a man with a long staff in his right hand speaking to the two gentlemen who followed, with the air of a professional guide, who is accustomed to talk as if he were reading to his audience out of an invisible book, and whom the hearers are unwilling to interrupt with questions, because they know that his knowledge scarcely extends beyond exactly what he says. Of his two remarkable-looking hearers one was wrapped in a long and splendid robe and wore a rich display of gold chains and rings, while the other wore nothing over his short chiton but a Roman toga thrown over his left shoulder.

His richly attired companion was an old man with a full and beardless face and thin grizzled hair. Irene gazed at him with admira-

tion and astonishment, but when she had feasted her eyes on the stuffs and ornaments he wore, she fixed them with much greater interest and attention on the tall and youthful figure at his side.

“Like Hui, the cook’s fat poodle, beside a young lion,” thought she to herself, as she noted the bustling step of the one and the independent and elastic gait of the other. She felt irresistibly tempted to mimic the older man, but this audacious impulse was soon quelled, for scarcely had the guide explained to the Roman that it was here that those pious recluses had their cells who served the god in voluntary captivity, as being consecrated to Serapis, and that they received their food through those windows—here he pointed upwards with his staff—when suddenly a shutter, which the cicerone of this ill-matched pair had touched with his stick, flew open with as much force and haste as if a violent gust of wind had caught it, and flung it back against the wall. And no less suddenly a man’s head—of

ferocious aspect and surrounded by a shock of grey hair like a lion's mane—looked out of the window and shouted to him who had knocked, in a deep and somewhat over-loud voice.

"If my shutter had been your back, you impudent rascal, your stick would have hit the right thing. Or if I had a cudgel between my teeth instead of a tongue, I would exercise it on you till it was as tired as that of a preacher who has threshed his empty straw to his congregation for three mortal hours. Scarcely is the sun risen when we are plagued by the parasitical and inquisitive mob. Why! they will rouse us at midnight next, and throw stones at our rotten old shutters. The effects of my last greeting lasted you for three weeks —to-day's I hope may act a little longer. You, gentlemen there, listen to me. Just as the raven follows an army to batten on the dead, so that fellow there stalks on in front of strangers in order to empty their pockets—and you, who call yourself an interpreter, and in learning Greek have forgotten the little Egyp-

tian you ever knew, mark this: When you have to guide strangers take them to see the Sphinx, or to consult the Apis in the Temple of Ptah, or lead them to the King's beast-garden at Alexandria, or the taverns at Kanopus, but don't bring them here, for we are neither pheasants, nor flute-playing women, nor miraculous beasts, who take a pleasure in being stared at. You, gentlemen, ought to choose a better guide than this chatter-mag that keeps up its perpetual rattle when once you set it going. As to you yourselves I will tell you one thing: Inquisitive eyes are intrusive company, and every prudent householder guards himself against them by keeping his door shut."

Irene shrank back and flattened herself against the pilaster which concealed her, for the shutter flew shut again with a slam, the recluse pulling it to with a rope attached to its outer edge, and he was hidden from the gaze of the strangers; but only for an instant, for the rusty hinges on which the shutter hung was not strong enough to bear such violent treat-

ment, and slowly giving way was about to fall. The blustering hermit stretched out an arm to support it and save it; but it was heavy, and his efforts would not have succeeded had not the young man in Roman dress given his assistance and lifted up the shutter with his hand and shoulder, without any effort, as if it were made of willow-laths instead of strong planks.

“A little higher still,” shouted the recluse to his assistant. “Let us set the thing on its edge! so, push away, a little more. There, I have propped up the wretched thing and there it may lie. If the bats pay me a visit to-night I will think of you and give them your best wishes.”

“You may save yourself that trouble,” replied the young man with cool dignity. “I will send you a carpenter who shall refix the shutter, and we offer you our apologies for having been the occasion of the mischief that has happened.”

The old man did not interrupt the speaker, but, when he had stared at him from head to foot, he said,

"You are strong and you speak fairly, and I might like you well enough if you were in other company. I don't want your carpenter; only send me down a hammer, a wedge, and a few strong nails. Now, you can do nothing more for me, so pack off."

"We are going at once," said the more handsomely dressed visitor in a thin and effeminate voice. "What can a man do when the boys pelt him with dirt from a safe hiding place, but take himself off."

"Be off, be off," said the person thus described, with a laugh. "As far off as Samothrace if you like, fat Eulæus; you can scarcely have forgotten the way there since you advised the king to escape thither with all his treasure. But if you cannot trust yourself to find it alone, I recommend you your interpreter and guide there to show you the road."

The Eunuch Eulæus, the favourite counsellor of King Ptolemy—called Philometor (the lover of his mother)—turned pale at these words, cast a sinister glance at the old man

and beckoned to the young Roman; he however was not inclined to follow, for the scolding old oddity had taken his fancy—perhaps because he was conscious that the old man, who generally showed no reserve in his dislikes, had a liking for him. Besides, he found nothing to object to in his opinion of his companions, so he turned to Eulæus and said courteously,

“Accept my best thanks for your company so far, and do not let me detain you any longer from your more important occupations on my account.”

Eulæus bowed and replied, “I know what my duty is. The King entrusted me with your safe-conduct; permit me therefore to wait for you under the acacias yonder.”

When Eulæus and the guide had reached the green grove, Irene hoped to find an opportunity to prefer her petition, but the Roman had stopped in front of the old man’s cell, and had begun a conversation with him which she could not venture to interrupt. She set down

the platter with the bread and dates that had been entrusted to her on a projecting stone by her side with a little sigh, crossed her arms and feet as she leaned against the wall, and pricked up her ears to hear their talk.

“I am not a Greek,” said the youth, “and you are quite mistaken in thinking that I came to Egypt and to see you out of mere curiosity.”

“But those who come only to pray in the temple,” interrupted the other, “do not—as it seems to me—choose an Eulæus for a companion, or any such couple as those now waiting for you under the acacias, and invoking anything rather than blessings on your head; at any rate, for my own part, even if I were a thief I would not go stealing in their company. What then brought you to Serapis?”

“It is my turn now to accuse you of curiosity!”

“By all means,” cried the old man, “I am an honest dealer and quite willing to take back the coin I am ready to pay away. Have you come to have a dream interpreted, or to sleep

in the temple yonder and have a face revealed to you?"

"Do I look so sleepy," said the Roman, "as to want to go to bed again now, only an hour after sunrise?"

"It may be," said the recluse, "that you have not yet fairly come to the end of yesterday, and that at the fag-end of some revelry it occurred to you that you might visit us and sleep away your headache at Serapis."

"A good deal of what goes on outside these walls seems to come to your ears," retorted the Roman, "and if I were to meet you in the street I should take you for a ship's captain or a master-builder who had to manage a number of unruly workmen. According to what I heard of you and the likes of you in Athens and elsewhere, I expected to find you something quite different."

"What did you expect?" said Serapion laughing. "I ask you notwithstanding the risk of being again considered curious."

"And I am very willing to answer," retorted

the other, "but if I were to tell you the whole truth I should run into imminent danger of being sent off as ignominiously as my unfortunate guide there."

"Speak on," said the old man, "I keep different garments for different men, and the worst are not for those who treat me to that rare dish — a little truth. But before you serve me up so bitter a meal tell me, what is your name?"

"Shall I call the guide?" said the Roman with an ironical laugh. "He can describe me completely, and give you the whole history of my family. But, joking apart, my name is Publius."

"The name of at least one out of every three of your countrymen."

"I am of the Cornelia gens and of the family of the Scipios," continued the youth in a low voice, as though he would rather avoid boasting of his illustrious name.

"Indeed, a noble gentleman, a very grand gentleman!" said the recluse, bowing deeply out

of his window. "But I knew that beforehand, for at your age and with such slender ankles to his long legs only a nobleman could walk as you walk. Then Publius Cornelius—"

"Nay, call me Scipio, or rather by my first name only, Publius," the youth begged him. "You are called Serapion, and I will tell you what you wish to know. When I was told that in this temple there were people who had themselves locked into their little chambers never to quit them, taking thought about their dreams and leading a meditative life, I thought they must be simpletons or fools or both at once."

"Just so, just so," interrupted Serapion. "But there is a fourth alternative you did not think of. Suppose now among these men there should be some shut up against their will, and what if I were one of those prisoners? I have asked you a great many questions and you have not hesitated to answer, and you may know how I got into this miserable cage and why I stay in it. I am the son of a good family, for my father was Overseer of the granaries of this

temple and was of Macedonian origin, but my mother was an Egyptian. I was born in an evil hour, on the twenty-seventh day of the month of Paophi, a day of which it is said in the sacred books that it is an evil day and that the child that is born in it must be kept shut up or else it will die of a snake-bite. In consequence of this luckless prediction many of those born on the same day as myself were, like me, shut up at an early age in this cage. My father would very willingly have left me at liberty, but my uncle, a caster of horoscopes in the temple of Ptah, who was all in all in my mother's estimation, and his friends with him, found many other evil signs about my body, read misfortune for me in the stars, declared that the Hathors had destined me to nothing but evil, and set upon her so persistently that at last I was destined to the cloister—we lived here at Memphis. I owe this misery to my dear mother and it was out of pure affection that she brought it upon me. You look enquiringly at me—aye, boy! life will teach you too

the lesson that the worst hate that can be turned against you often entails less harm upon you than blind tenderness which knows no reason. I learned to read and write, and all that is usually taught to the priest's sons, but never to accommodate myself to my lot, and I never shall.—Well, when my beard grew I succeeded in escaping and I lived for a time in the world. I have been even to Rome, to Carthage, and in Syria; but at last I longed to drink Nile water once more and I returned to Egypt. Why? Because, fool that I was, I fancied that bread and water with captivity tasted better in my own country than cakes and wine with freedom in the land of the stranger.

“In my father's house I found only my mother still living, for my father had died of grief. Before my flight she had been a tall, fine woman, when I came home I found her faded and dying. Anxiety for me, a miserable wretch, had consumed her, said the physician—that was the hardest thing to bear. When at last the poor, good little woman, who could so fondly

persuade me—a wild scamp—impled me on her death-bed to return to my retreat, I yielded, and swore to her that I would stay in my prison patiently to the end, for I am as water is in northern countries, a child may turn me with its little hand or else I am as hard and as cold as crystal. My old mother died soon after I had taken this oath. I kept my word as you see—and you have seen too how I endure my fate."

"Patiently enough," replied Publius, "I should writhe in my chains far more rebelliously than you, and I fancy it must do you good to rage and storm sometimes as you did just now."

"As much good as sweet wine from Chios!" exclaimed the anchorite, smacking his lips as if he tasted the noble juice of the grape, and stretching his matted head as far as possible out of the window. Thus it happened that he saw Irene, and called out to her in a cheery voice:

"What are you doing there, child? You are

standing as if you were waiting to say good morning to good fortune."

The girl hastily took up the trencher, smoothed down her hair with her other hand, and as she approached the men, colouring slightly, Publius feasted his eyes on her in surprise and admiration.

But Serapion's words had been heard by another person, who now emerged from the acacia grove and joined the young Roman, exclaiming before he came up with them:

"Waiting for good fortune! does the old man say? And you can hear it said, Publius, and not reply that she herself must bring good fortune wherever she appears."

The speaker was a young Greek, dressed with extreme care, and he now stuck the pomegranate blossom he carried in his hand behind his ear, so as to shake hands with his friend Publius; then he turned his fair, saucy, almost girlish face with its finely cut features up to the recluse, wishing to attract his attention to himself by his next speech.

“With Plato’s greeting ‘to deal fairly and honestly’ do I approach you!” he cried; and then he went on more quietly: “But indeed you can hardly need such a warning, for you belong to those who know how to conquer true—that is the inner—freedom; for who can be freer than he who needs nothing? And as none can be nobler than the freest of the free, accept the tribute of my respect, and scorn not the greeting of Lysias of Corinth, who, like Alexander, would fain exchange lots with you, the Diogenes of Egypt, if it were vouchsafed to him always to see out the window of your mansion—otherwise not very desirable—the charming form of this damsel—”

“That is enough, young man,” said Serapion, interrupting the Greek’s flow of words. “This young girl belongs to the temple, and any one who is tempted to speak to her as if she were a flute-player will have to deal with me, her protector. Yes, with me; and your friend here will bear me witness that it may not be altogether to your advantage to have a quarrel with

such as I. Now, step back, young gentlemen, and let the girl tell me what she needs."

When Irene stood face to face with the anchorite, and had told him quickly and in a low voice what she had done, and that her sister Klea was even now waiting for her return, Serapion laughed aloud, and then said in a low tone, but gaily, as a father teases his daughter:

"She has eaten enough for two, and here she stands, on her tip-toes, reaching up to my window, as if it were not an over-fed girl that stood in her garments, but some airy sprite. We may laugh, but Klea, poor thing, she must be hungry?"

Irene made no reply, but she stood taller on tip-toe than ever, put her face up to Serapion, nodding her pretty head at him again and again, and as she looked roguishly and yet imploringly into his eyes Serapion went on:

"And so I am to give my breakfast to Klea, that is what you want; but unfortunately that breakfast is a thing of the past and beyond

recall; nothing is left of it but the date-stones. But there, on the trencher in your hand, is a nice little meal."

"That is the offering to Serapis sent by old Phibis," answered the girl.

"Hm, hm—oh! of course!" muttered the old man. "So long as it is for a god—surely he might do without it better than a poor famishing girl."

Then he went on, gravely and emphatically, as a teacher who has made an incautious speech before his pupils endeavours to rectify it by another of more solemn import.

"Certainly, things given into our charge should never be touched; besides, the gods first and man afterwards. Now if only I knew what to do. But, by the soul of my father! Serapis himself sends us what we need. Step close up to me, noble Scipio—or Publius, if I may so call you—and look out towards the acacias. Do you see my favourite, your cicerone, and the bread and roast fowls that your slave has

brought him in that leathern wallet? And now he is setting a wine-jar on the carpet he has spread at the big feet of Eulæus—they will be calling you to share the meal in a minute, but I know of a pretty child who is very hungry—for a little white cat stole away her breakfast this morning. Bring me half a loaf and the wing of a fowl, and a few pomegranates if you like, or one of the peaches Eulæus is so judiciously fingering. Nay—you may bring two of them, I have a use for both."

"Serapion!" exclaimed Irene in mild reproof and looking down at the ground; but the Greek answered with prompt zeal, "More, much more than that I can bring you. I hasten—"

"Stay here," interrupted Publius with decision, holding him back by the shoulder. "Serapion's request was addressed to me, and I prefer to do my friend's pleasure in my own person."

"Go then," cried the Greek after Publius as he hurried away. "You will not allow me even

thanks from the sweetest lips in Memphis. Only look, Serapion, what a hurry he is in. And now poor Eulæus has to get up ; a ~~hippopotamus~~ might learn from him how to do so with due awkwardness. Well! I call that making short work of it—a Roman never asks before he takes ; he has got all he wants and Eulæus looks after him like a cow whose calf has been stolen from her ; to be sure I myself would rather eat peaches than see them carried away ! Oh if only the people in the Forum could see him now ! Publius Cornelius Scipio Nasica, own grandson to the great Africanus, serving like a slave at a feast with a dish in each hand ! Well Publius, what has Rome the all conquering brought home this time in token of victory ? ”

“ Sweet peaches and a roast pheasant , ” said Cornelius laughing, and he handed two dishes into the anchorite’s window ; “ there is enough left still for the old man . ”

“ Thanks, many thanks ! ” cried Serapion, beckoning to Irene, and he gave her a golden-

yellow cake of wheaten bread, half of the roast bird, already divided by Eulæus, and two peaches, and whispered to her: "Klea may come for the rest herself when these men are gone. Now thank this kind gentleman and go."

For an instant the girl stood transfixed, her face crimson with confusion and her glistening white teeth set in her nether lip, speechless, face to face with the young Roman and avoiding the earnest gaze of his black eyes. Then she collected herself and said:

"You are very kind. I cannot make any pretty speeches, but I thank you most kindly."

"And your very kind thanks," replied Publius, "add to the delights of this delightful morning. I should very much like to possess one of the violets out of your hair in remembrance of this day—and of you."

"Take them all," exclaimed Irene, hastily taking the bunch from her hair and holding them out to the Roman; but before he could take them she drew back her hand and said with an air of importance:

"The Queen has had them in her hand. My sister Klea got them yesterday in the procession."

Scipio's face grew grave at these words, and he asked with commanding brevity and sharpness:

"Has your sister black hair and is she taller than you are, and did she wear a golden fillet in the procession? Did she give you these flowers? Yes—do you say? Well then, she had the bunch from me, but although she accepted them she seems to have taken very little pleasure in them, for what we value we do not give away—so there they may go, far enough!"

With these words he flung the flowers over the house and then he went on:

"But you, child, you shall be held guiltless of their loss. Give me your pomegranate flower, Lysias!"

"Certainly not," replied the Greek. "You chose to do pleasure to your friend Serapion in your own person when you kept me from going

to fetch the peaches, and now I desire to offer this flower to the fair Irene with my own hand."

"Take his flower," said Publius, turning his back abruptly on the girl, while Lysias laid the blossom on the trencher in the maiden's hand; she felt the rough manners of the young Roman as if she had been touched by a hard hand; she bowed silently and timidly and then quickly ran home.

Publius looked thoughtfully after her till Lysias called out to him:

"What has come over me? Has saucy Eros perchance wandered by mistake into the temple of gloomy Serapis this morning?"

"That would not be wise," interrupted the recluse, "for Cerberus, who lies at the foot of our God, would soon pluck the fluttering wings of the airy youngster," and as he spoke he looked significantly at the Greek.

"Aye! if he let himself be caught by the three-headed monster," laughed Lysias. "But

come away now, Publius; Eulæus has waited long enough."

"You go to him then," answered the Roman, "I will follow soon; but first I have a word to say to Serapion."

Since Irene's disappearance, the old man had turned his attention to the acacia grove where Eulæus was still feasting. When the Roman addressed him he said, shaking his great head with dissatisfaction:

"Your eyes of course are no worse than mine. Only look at that man munching and moving his jaws and smacking his lips. By Serapis! you can tell the nature of a man by watching him eat. You know I sit in my cage unwillingly enough, but I am thankful for one thing about it, and that is that it keeps me far from all that such a creature as Eulæus calls enjoyment—for such enjoyment, I tell you, degrades a man."

"Then you are more of a philosopher than you wish to seem," replied Publius.

"I wish to seem nothing," answered the

anchorite. "For it is all the same to me what others think of me. But if a man who has nothing to do and whose quiet is rarely disturbed, and who thinks his own thoughts about many things is a Philosopher, you may call me one if you like. If at any time you should need advice you may come here again, for I like you, and you might be able to do me an important service."

"Only speak," interrupted the Roman, "I should be glad from my heart to be of any use to you."

"Not now," said Serapion softly. "But come again when you have time—without your companions there, of course—at any rate without Eulæus, who of all the scoundrels I ever came across is the very worst. It may be as well to tell you at once that what I might require of you would concern not myself but the weal or woe of the water-bearers, the two maidens you have seen and who much need protection."

"I came here for my parents' sake and for

Klea's, and not on your account," said Publius frankly. "There is something in her mien and in her eyes which perhaps may repel others but which attracts me. How came so admirable a creature in your temple?"

"When you come again," replied the recluse, "I will tell you the history of the sisters and what they owe to Eulæus. Now go, and understand me when I say the girls are well guarded. This observation is for the benefit of the Greek who is but a heedless fellow; but you, when you know who the girls are, will help me to protect them."

"That I would do as it is, with real pleasure," replied Publius; he took leave of the recluse and called out to Eulæus.

"What a delightful morning it has been!"

"It would have been pleasanter for me," replied Eulæus, "if you had not deprived me of your company for such a long time."

"That is to say," answered the Roman, "that I have stayed away longer than I ought."

"You behave after the fashion of your race," said the other bowing low. "They have kept even kings waiting in their ante-chambers."

"But you do not wear a crown," said Publius evasively. "And if any one should know how to wait it is an old courtier, who—"

"When it is at the command of his sovereign," interrupted Eulæus, "the old courtier may submit, even when youngsters choose to treat him with contempt."

"That hits us both," said Publius, turning to Lysias. "Now you may answer him, I have heard and said enough."

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## CHAPTER III.

IRENE'S foot was not more susceptible to the chafing of a strap than her spirit to a rough or an unkind word; the Roman's words and manner had hurt her feelings.

She went towards home with a drooping head and almost crying, but before she had reached it her eyes fell on the peaches and the roast bird she was carrying. Her thoughts flew to her sister and how much the famishing girl would relish so savoury a meal; she smiled again, her eyes shone with pleasure, and she went on her way with a quickened step. It never once occurred to her that Klea would ask for the violets, or that the young Roman could be anything more to her sister than any other stranger.

She had never had any other companion than Klea, and after work, when other girls

commonly discussed their longings and their agitations and the pleasures and the torments of love, these two used to get home so utterly wearied that they wanted nothing but peace and sleep. If they had sometimes an hour for idle chat Klea ever and again would tell some story of their old home, and Irene, who even within the solemn walls of the temple of Serapis sought and found many innocent pleasures, would listen to her willingly, and interrupt her with questions and with anecdotes of small events or details which she fancied she remembered of her early childhood, but which in fact she had first learnt from her sister, though the force of a lively imagination had made them seem a part and parcel of her own experience.

Klea had not observed Irene's long absence since, as we know, shortly after her sister had set out, overpowered by hunger and fatigue she had fallen asleep. Before her nodding head had finally sunk and her drooping eye-lids had closed, her lips now and then puckered and twitched as if with grief; then her features grew tranquil,

her lips parted softly and a smile gently lighted up her blushing cheeks, as the breath of spring softly thaws a frozen blossom. This sleeper was certainly not born for loneliness and privation, but to enjoy and to keep love and happiness.

It was warm and still, very still in the sisters' little room. The buzz of a fly was audible now and again, as it flew round the little oil-cup Irene had left empty, and now and again the breathing of the sleeper, coming more and more rapidly. Every trace of fatigue had vanished from Klea's countenance, her lips parted and pouted as if for a kiss, her cheeks glowed, and at last she raised both hands as if to defend herself and stammered out in her dream, "No, no, certainly not—pray, do not! my love—" Then her arm fell again by her side, and dropping on the chest on which she was sitting, the blow woke her. She slowly opened her eyes with a happy smile; then she raised her long silken lashes till her eyes were open, and she gazed fixedly on vacancy as

though something strange had met her gaze. Thus she sat for some time without moving; then she started up, pressed her hand on her brow and eyes, and shuddering as if she had seen something horrible or were shivering with ague, she murmured in gasps, while she clenched her teeth:

“What does this mean? How come I by such thoughts? What demons are these that make us do and feel things in our dreams which when we are waking we should drive far, far from our thoughts? I could hate myself, despise and hate myself for the sake of those dreams since, wretch that I am! I let him put his arm round me—and no bitter rage—ah! no—something quite different, something exquisitely sweet, thrilled through my soul.”

As she spoke, she clenched her fists and pressed them against her temples; then again her arms dropped languidly into her lap, and shaking her head she went on in an altered and softened voice:

“Still—it was only in a dream and—Oh!

ye eternal gods—when we are asleep—well! and what then? Has it come to this; to impure thoughts I am adding self-deception! No, this dream was sent by no demon, it was only a distorted reflection of what I felt yesterday and the day before, and before that even, when the tall stranger looked straight into my eyes—four times he has done so now—and then—how many hours ago, gave me the violets. Did I even turn away my face or punish his boldness with an angry look? Is it not sometimes possible to drive away an enemy with a glance? I have often succeeded when a man has looked after us; but yesterday I could not, and I was as wide awake then as I am at this moment. What does the stranger want with me? What is it he asks with his penetrating glance, which for days has followed me wherever I turn, and robs me of peace even in my sleep? Why should I open my eyes—the gates of the heart—to him? And now the poison poured in through them is seething there; but I will tear it out, and when Irene comes home I will tread the violets into

the dust, or leave them with her; she will soon pull them to pieces or leave them to wither miserably—for I will remain pure-minded, even in my dreams—what have I besides in the world?"

At these words she broke off her soliloquy, for she heard Irene's voice, a sound that must have had a favourable effect on her spirit, for she paused, and the bitter expression her beautiful features had but just now worn disappeared as she murmured, drawing a deep breath:

"I am not utterly bereft and wretched so long as I have her, and can hear her voice."

Irene, on her road home, had given the modest offerings of the Anchorite Phibis into the charge of one of the temple-servants to lay before the altar of Serapis, and now as she came into the room she hid the platter with the Roman's donation behind her, and while still in the doorway, called out to her sister:

"Guess now, what have I here?"

"Bread and dates from Serapion," replied Klea.

"Oh, dear no!" cried the other, holding out the plate to her sister, "the very nicest dainties, fit for gods and kings. Only feel this peach, does not it feel as soft as one of little Philo's cheeks? If I could always provide such a substitute you would wish I might eat up your breakfast every day. And now do you know who gave you all this? No, that you will never guess! The tall Roman gave them me, the same you had the violets from yesterday."

Klea's face turned crimson, and she said shortly and decidedly:

"How do you know that?"

"Because he told me so himself," replied Irene in a very altered tone, for her sister's eyes were fixed upon her with an expression of stern gravity, such as Irene had never seen in her before.

"And where are the violets?" asked Klea.

"He took them, and his friend gave me this pomegranate flower," stammered Irene. "He himself wanted to give it me, but the Greek—a handsome, merry man—would not permit it, and

laid the flower there on the platter. Take it—but do not look at me like that any longer, for I cannot bear it!"

"I do not want it," said her sister, but not sharply; then, looking down, she asked in a low voice: "Did the Roman keep the violets?"

"He kept—no, Klea—I will not tell you a lie! He flung them over the house, and said such rough things as he did it, that I was frightened and turned my back upon him quickly, for I felt the tears coming into my eyes. What have you to do with the Roman? I feel so anxious, so frightened—as I do sometimes when a storm is gathering and I am afraid of it. And how pale your lips are! that comes of long fasting, no doubt—eat now, as much as you can. But Klea! why do you look at me so—and look so gloomy and terrible? I cannot bear that look, I cannot bear it!"

Irene sobbed aloud, and her sister went up to her, stroked her soft hair from her brow, kissed her kindly, and said:

"I am not angry with you, child, and did not mean to hurt you. If only I could cry as you do when clouds overshadow my heart, the blue sky would shine again with me as soon as it does with you. Now dry your eyes, go up to the temple, and enquire at what hour we are to go to the singing-practice, and when the procession is to set out."

Irene obeyed; she went out with down-cast eyes, but once out she looked up again brightly, for she remembered the procession, and it occurred to her that she would then see again the Roman's gay acquaintance, and turning back into the room she laid her pomegranate blossom in the little bowl out of which she had formerly taken the violets, kissed her sister as gaily as ever, and then reflected as to whether she would wear the flower in her hair or in her bosom. Wear it, at any rate, she must, for she must show plainly that she knew how to value such a gift.

As soon as Klea was alone she seized the trencher with a vehement gesture, gave the

roast bird to the grey cat, who had stolen back into the room, turning away her head, for the mere smell of the pheasant was like an insult. Then, while the cat bore off her welcome spoils into a corner, she clutched a peach and raised her hand to fling it away through a gap in the roof of the room; but she did not carry out her purpose, for it occurred to her that Irene and little Philo, the son of the gatekeeper, might enjoy the luscious fruit; so she laid it back on the dish and took up the bread, for she was painfully hungry.

She was on the point of breaking the golden brown cake, but acting on a rapid impulse she tossed it back on the trencher saying to herself: "At any rate I will owe him nothing; but I will not throw away the gifts of the gods as he threw away my violets, for that would be a sin. All is over between him and me, and if he appears to-day in the procession, and if he chooses to look at me again I will compel my eyes to avoid meeting his—aye, that I will, and will carry it through. But, Oh eternal gods! and

thou above all, great Serapis, whom I heartily serve, there is another thing I cannot do without your aid. Help me, oh! help me to forget him, that my very thoughts may remain pure."

With these words she flung herself on her knees before the chest, pressed her brow against the hard wood, and strove to pray.

Only for one thing did she entreat the gods: for strength to forget the man who had betrayed her into losing her peace of mind.

But just as swift clouds float across the sky, distracting the labours of the star gazer, who is striving to observe some remote planet—as the clatter of the street interrupts again and again some sweet song we fain would hear, marring it with its harsh discords—so again and again the image of the young Roman came across Klea's prayers for release from that very thought, and at last it seemed to her that she was like a man who strives to raise a block of stone by the exertion of his utmost strength, and who weary at last of lifting the stone is

crushed to the earth by its weight; still she felt that, in spite of all her prayers and efforts, the enemy she strove to keep off only came nearer, and instead of flying from her, overmastered her soul with a grasp from which she could not escape.

Finally she gave up the unavailing struggle, cooled her burning face with cold water, and tightened the straps of her sandals to go to the temple; near the god himself she hoped she might in some degree recover the peace she could not find here.

Just at the door she met Irene, who told her that the singing practice was put off, on account of the procession which was fixed for four hours after noon. And as Klea went towards the temple her sister called after her.

"Do not stay too long though, water will be wanted again directly for the libations."

"Then will you go alone to the work," asked Klea; "there cannot be very much wanted, for

the temple will soon be empty on account of the procession. A few jars full will be enough. There is a cake of bread and a peach in there for you; I must keep the other for little Philo."

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## CHAPTER IV.

KLEA went quickly on towards the temple, without listening to Irene's excuses. She paid no heed to the worshippers who filled the fore-court, praying either with heads bent low or with uplifted arms or, if they were of Egyptian extraction, kneeling on the smooth stone pavement, for, even as she entered, she had already begun to turn in supplication to the divinity.

She crossed the great hall of the sanctuary, which was open only to the initiated and to the temple servants, of whom she was one. Here all round her stood a crowd of slender columns, their shafts crowned with gracefully curved flower calyxes, like stems supporting lilies, over her head she saw in the ceiling an image of the midnight-sky with the bright, unresting and ever-restful stars; the planets and fixed stars in their golden barks looked down on her

## THE SISTERS.

silently. Yes! here were the twilight and stillness befitting a personal communion with the divinity.

The pillars appeared to her fancy like a forest of giant growth, and it seemed to her that the perfume of the incense emanated from the gorgeous floral capitals that crowned them; it penetrated her senses, which were rendered more acute by fasting and agitation, with a sort of intoxication. Her eyes were raised to heaven, her arms crossed over her bosom as she traversed this vast hall, and with trembling steps approached a smaller and lower chamber, where in the furthest and darkest back-ground a curtain of heavy and costly material veiled the brazen door of the holy of holies.

Even she was forbidden to approach this sacred place; but to-day she was so filled with longing for the inspiring assistance of the god, that she went on to the holy of holies in spite of the injunction she had never yet broken, not to approach it. Filled with reverent awe she sank down close to the door of the sacred

chamber, shrinking close into the angle formed between a projecting door-post and the wall of the great hall.

The craving desire to seek and find a power outside us as guiding the path of our destiny is common to every nation, to every man; it is as surely innate in every being gifted with reason—many and various as these are—as the impulse to seek a cause when we perceive an effect, to see when light visits the earth, or to hear when swelling waves of sound fall on our ear. Like every other gift, no doubt that of religious sensibility is bestowed in different degrees on different natures. In Klea it had always been strongly developed, and a pious mother had cultivated it by precept and example, while her father always had taught her one thing only: namely to be true, inexorably true, to others as to herself.

Afterwards she had been daily employed in the service of the god whom she was accustomed to regard as the greatest and most powerful of all the immortals, for often from a distance she

had seen the curtain of the sanctuary pushed aside, and the statue of Serapis with the Kallathos on his head, and a figure of Cerberus at his feet, visible in the half-light of the holy of holies; and a ray of light, flashing through the darkness as by a miracle, would fall upon his brow and kiss his lips when his goodness was sung by the priests in hymns of praise. At other times the tapers by the side of the god would be lighted or extinguished spontaneously.

Then, with the other believers, she would glorify the great Lord of the other world, who caused a new sun to succeed each that was extinguished, and made life grow up out of death; who resuscitated the dead, lifting them up to be equal with him, if on earth they had reverenced truth and were found faithful by the judges of the nether world.

Truth—which her father had taught her to regard as the best possession of life—was rewarded by Serapis above all other virtues; hearts were weighed before him in a scale

against truth, and whenever Klea tried to picture the god in human form he wore the grave and mild features of her father, and she fancied him speaking in the words and tones of the man to whom she owed her being, who had been too early snatched from her, who had endured so much for righteousness' sake, and from whose lips she had never heard a single word that might not have beseemed the god himself. And, as she crouched closely in the dark angle by the holy of holies, she felt herself nearer to her father as well as to the god, and accused herself pitilessly, in that unmaidenly longings had stirred her heart, that she had been insincere to herself and Irene, nay in that if she could not succeed in tearing the image of the Roman from her heart she would be compelled either to deceive her sister or to sadden the innocent and careless nature of the impressionable child, whom she was accustomed to succour and cherish as a mother might. On her, even apparently light matters weighed oppressively, while Irene could throw off even

grave and serious things, blowing them off as it were into the air, like a feather. She was like wet clay on which even the light touch of a butterfly leaves a mark, her sister like a mirror from which the breath that has dimmed it instantly and entirely vanishes.

“Great God!” she murmured in her prayer, “I feel as if the Roman had branded my very soul. Help thou me to efface the mark; help me to become as I was before, so that I may look again in Irene’s eyes without concealment, pure and true, and that I may be able to say to myself, as I was wont, that I had thought and acted in such a way as my father would approve if he could know it.”

She was still praying thus when the footsteps and voices of two men approaching the holy of holies startled her from her devotions; she suddenly became fully conscious of the fact that she was in a forbidden spot, and would be severely punished if she were discovered.

“Lock that door,” cried one of the new

comers to his companion, pointing to the door which led from the *prosekos* into the pillared hall, "none, even of the initiated, need see what you are preparing here for us—"

Klea recognised the voice of the high-priest, and thought for a moment of stepping forward and confessing her guilt; but, though she did not usually lack courage, she did not do this, but shrank still more closely into her hiding-place, which was perfectly dark when the brazen door of the room, which had no windows, was closed. She now perceived that the curtain and door were opened which closed the inmost sanctuary, she heard one of the men twirling the stick which was to produce fire, saw the first gleam of light from it streaming out of the holy of holies, and then heard the blows of a hammer and the grating sound of a file.

The quiet sanctum was turned into a forge, but noisy as were the proceedings within, it seemed to Klea that the beating of her own heart was even louder than the brazen clatter of the tools wielded by Krates; he was one of the

oldest of the priests of Serapis, who was chief in charge of the sacred vessels, who was wont never to speak to any one but the high-priest, and who was famous even among his Greek fellow-countrymen for the skill with which he could repair broken metal-work, make the surest locks, and work in silver and gold.

When the sisters first came into the temple five years since, Irene had been very much afraid of this man, who was so small as almost to be a dwarf, broad shouldered and powerfully knit, while his wrinkled face looked a piece of rough cork-bark, and he was subject to a painful complaint in his feet which often prevented his walking; her fears had not vexed but only amused the priestly smith, who whenever he met the child, then eleven years old, would turn his lips up to his big red nose, roll his eyes, and grunt hideously to increase the terror that came over her.

He was not ill-natured, but he had neither wife nor child, nor brother, nor sister, nor friend, and every human being so keenly desires that others

should have some feeling about him, that many an one would rather be feared than remain unheeded.

After Irene had got over her dread she would often entreat the old man—who was regarded as stern and inaccessible by all the other dwellers in the temple—in her own engaging and coaxing way to make a face for her, and he would do it and laugh when the little one, to his delight and her own, was terrified at it and ran away; and just lately when Irene, having hurt her foot, was obliged to keep her room for a few days, an unheard-of thing had occurred: he had asked Klea with the greatest sympathy how her sister was going on, and had given her a cake for her.

While Krates was at his work not a word passed between him and the high priest. At length he laid down the hammer, and said:

“I do not much like work of this kind, but this, I think, is successful at any rate. Any temple-servant, hidden here behind the altar,

can now light or extinguish the lamps without the illusion being detected by the sharpest. Go now and stand at the door of the great-hall and speak the word."

Klea heard the high-priest accede to this request and cry in a chanting voice: "Thus he commands the night and it becomes day, and the extinguished taper and lo! it flames with brightness. If indeed thou art nigh, Oh Serapis! manifest thyself to us."

At these words a bright stream of light flashed from the holy of holies, and again was suddenly extinguished when the high-priest sang: "Thus shonest thou thyself as light to the children of truth, but dost punish with darkness the children of lies."

"Again?" asked Krates in a voice which conveyed a desire that the answer might be 'No.'

"I must trouble you," replied the high-priest. "Good! the performance went much better this time. I was always well assured of your skill; but consider the particular importance of this

affair. The two Kings and the Queen will probably be present at the solemnity, certainly Philometor and Cleopatra will, and their eyes are wide open; then the Roman who has already assisted four times at the procession will accompany them, and if I judge him rightly he, like many of the nobles of his nation, is one of those who can trust themselves when it is necessary to be content with the old gods of their fathers; and as regards the marvels we are able to display to them, they do not take them to heart like the poor in spirit, but measure and weigh them with a cool and unbiassed mind. People of that stamp, who are not ashamed to worship, who do not philosophise but only think just so much as is necessary for acting rightly, those are the worst contemners of every supersensual manifestation."

"And the students of nature in the Museum?" asked Krates. "They believe nothing to be real that they cannot see and observe."

"And for that very reason," replied the

high-priest, "they are often singularly easy to deceive by your skill, since, seeing an effect without a cause, they are inclined to regard the invisible cause as something supersensual. Now, open the door again and let us get out by the side door; do you, this time, undertake the task of co-operating with Serapis yourself. Consider that Philometor will not confirm the donation of the land unless he quits the temple deeply penetrated by the greatness of our god. Would it be possible, do you think, to have the new censer ready in time for the birthday of King Euergetes, which is to be solemnly kept at Memphis?"

"We will see," replied Krates, "I must first put together the lock of the great door of the tomb of Apis, for so long as I have it in my workshop any one can open it who sticks a nail into the hole above the bar, and any one can shut it inside who pushes the iron bolt. Send to call me before the performance with the lights begins; I will come in spite of my wretched feet. As I have undertaken the thing

I will carry it out, but for no other reason, for it is my opinion that even without such means of deception—”

“We use no deception,” interrupted the high-priest, sternly rebuking his colleague. “We only present to short-sighted mortals the creative power of the divinity in a form perceptible and intelligible to their senses.”

With these words the tall priest turned his back on the smith and quitted the hall by a side door; Krates opened the brazen door, and as he gathered together his tools he said to himself, but loud enough for Klea to hear him distinctly in her hiding place:

“It may be right for me, but deceit is deceit, whether a god deceives a king or a child deceives a beggar.”

“Deceit is deceit,” repeated Klea after the smith when he had left the hall and she had emerged from her corner.

She stood still for a moment and looked round her. For the first time she observed the shabby colours on the walls, the damage the

pillars had sustained in the course of years, and the loose slabs in the pavement.

The sweetness of the incense sickened her, and as she passed by an old man who threw up his arms in fervent supplication, she looked at him with a glance of compassion.

When she had passed out beyond the pylons enclosing the temple she turned round, shaking her head in a puzzled way as she gazed at it; for she knew that not a stone had been changed within the last hour, and yet it looked as strange in her eyes as some landscape with which we have become familiar in all the beauty of spring, and see once more in winter with its trees bare of leaves; or like the face of a woman which we thought beautiful under the veil which hid it, and which, when the veil is raised, we see to be wrinkled and devoid of charm.

When she had heard the smith's words, "Deceit is deceit," she felt her heart shrink as from a stab, and could not check the tears which started to her eyes, unused as they were to weeping; but as soon as she had repeated

the stern verdict with her own lips her tears had ceased, and now she stood looking at the temple like a traveller who takes leave of a dear friend; she was excited, she breathed more freely, drew herself up taller, and then turned her back on the Sanctuary of Serapis, proudly though with a sore heart.

Close to the gate-keeper's lodge a child came tottering towards her with his arms stretched up to her. She lifted him up, kissed him, and then asked the mother, who also greeted her, for a piece of bread, for her hunger was becoming intolerable. While she ate the dry morsel the child sat on her lap, following with his large eyes the motion of her hand and lips. The boy was about five years old, with legs so feeble that they could scarcely support the weight of his body, but he had a particularly sweet little face; certainly it was quite without expression, and it was only when he saw Klea coming that tiny Philo's eyes had lighted up with pleasure.

“Drink this milk,” said the child's mother,

offering the young girl an earthen bowl. "There is not much, and I could not spare it if Philo would eat like other children, but it seems as if it hurt him to swallow. He drinks two or three drops and eats a mouthful, and then will take no more even if he is beaten."

"You have not been beating him again?" said Klea reproachfully, and drawing the child closer to her.

"My husband—" said the woman, pulling at her dress in some confusion. "The child was born on a good day and in a lucky hour, and yet he is so puny and weak and will not learn to speak, and that provokes Pianchi."

"He will spoil everything again!" exclaimed Klea annoyed. "Where is he?"

"He was wanted in the temple."

"And is he not pleased that Philo calls him 'father,' and you 'mother,' and me by my name, and that he learns to distinguish many things?" asked the girl.

"Oh, yes of course," said the woman. "He says you are teaching him to speak just as if

he were a starling, and we are very much obliged to you."

"That is not what I want," interrupted Klea. "What I wish is that you should not punish and scold the boy, and that you should be as glad as I am when you see his poor little dormant soul slowly waking up. If he goes on like this, the poor little fellow will be quite sharp and intelligent. What is my name, my little one?"

"Ke-ea," stammered the child, smiling at his friend.

"And now taste this that I have in my hand; what is it?—I see you know. It is called —whisper in my ear. That's right, mil—mil—milk! to be sure, my tiny, it is milk. Now open your little mouth and say it prettily after me—once more—and again—say it twelve times quite right and I will give you a kiss! Now you have earned a pretty kiss—will you have it here or here? Well, and what is this? your ea—? Yes, your ear. And this?—your nose, that is right."

The child's eyes brightened more and more under this gentle teaching, and neither Klea nor her pupil were weary till, about an hour later, the re-echoing sound of a brass gong called her away. As she turned to go the little one ran after her crying; she took him in her arms and carried him back to his mother, and then went on to her own room to dress herself and her sister for the procession. On the way to the Pastophorium she recalled once more her expedition to the temple and her prayer there.

"Even before the sanctuary," said she to herself, "I could not succeed in releasing my soul from its burden—it was not till I set to work to loosen the tongue of the poor little child. Every pure spot, it seems to me, may be the chosen sanctuary of some divinity, and is not an infant's soul purer than the altar where truth is mocked at?"

In their room she found Irene; she had dressed her hair carefully and stuck the pome-

granate flower in it, and she asked Klea if she thought she looked well.

"You look like Aphrodite herself," replied Klea kissing her forehead. Then she arranged the folds of her sister's dress, fastened on the ornaments, and proceeded to dress herself. While she was fastening her sandals Irene asked her, "Why do you sigh so bitterly?" and Klea replied, "I feel as if I had lost my parents a second time."

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## CHAPTER V.

THE procession was over.

At the great service which had been performed before him in the Greek Serapeum, Ptolemy Philometor had endowed the priests not with the whole but with a considerable portion of the land concerning which they had approached him with many petitions. After the court had once more quitted Memphis and the procession was broken up, the sisters returned to their room, Irene with crimson cheeks and a smile on her lips, Klea with a gloomy and almost threatening light in her eyes.

As the two were going to their room in silence a temple-servant called to Klea, desiring her to go with him to the high priest, who wished to speak to her. Klea, without speaking, gave her water-jar to Irene and was conducted into a chamber of the temple, which was

used for keeping the sacred vessels in. There she sat down on a bench to wait. The two men who in the morning had visited the Pastophorium had also followed in the procession with the Royal Family. At the close of the solemnities Publius had parted from his companion without taking leave, and without looking to the right or to the left, he had hastened back to the Pastophorium and to the cell of Serapion, the recluse.

The old man heard from afar the younger man's footstep, which fell on the earth with a firmer and more decided tread than that of the softly-stepping priests of Serapis, and he greeted him warmly with signs and words. Publius thanked him coolly and gravely, and said, drily enough and with incisive brevity :

“My time is limited. I propose shortly to quit Memphis, but I promised you to hear your request, and in order to keep my word I have come to see you; still—as I have said—only to keep my word. The water-bearers of whom you desired to speak to me do not interest me

—I care no more about them than about the swallows flying over the house yonder."

"And yet this morning you took a long walk for Klea's sake," returned Serapion.

"I have often taken a much longer one to shoot a hare," answered the Roman. "We men do not pursue our game because the possession of it is any temptation, but because we love the sport, and there are sporting natures even among women. Instead of spears or arrows they shoot with flashing glances, and when they think they have hit their game they turn their back upon it. Your Klea is one of this sort, while the pretty little one I saw this morning looks as if she were very ready to be hunted—I, however, no more wish to be the hunter of a young girl than to be her game. I have still three days to spend in Memphis, and then I shall turn my back for ever on this stupid country."

"This morning," said Serapion, who began to suspect what the grievance might be which had excited the discontent implied in the

Roman's speech, "This morning you appeared to be in less hurry to set out than now, so to me you seem to be in the plight of game trying to escape; however, I know Klea better than you do. Shooting is no sport of hers, nor will she let herself be hunted, for she has a characteristic which you, my friend Publius Scipio, ought to recognise and value above all others—she is proud, very proud; aye, and so she may be, scornful as you look—as if you would like to say 'how came a water carrier of Serapis by her pride, a poor creature who is ill-fed and always engaged in service, pride which is the prescriptive right only of those, whom privilege raises above the common herd around them?'—But this girl, you may take my word for it, has ample reason to hold her head high, not only because she is the daughter of free and noble parents and is distinguished by rare beauty, not because while she was still a child she undertook, with the devotion and constancy of the best of mothers, the care of another child—her own sister, but for a reason which, if I judge

you rightly, you will understand better than many another young man; because she must uphold her pride in order that among the lower servants with whom unfortunately she is forced to work, she may never forget that she is a free and noble lady. You can set your pride aside and yet remain what you are, but if she were to do so and to learn to feel as a servant, she would presently become in fact what by nature she is not and by circumstances is compelled to be. A fine horse made to carry burdens becomes a mere cart horse as soon as it ceases to hold up its head and lift its feet freely. Klea is proud because she must be proud; and if you are just you will not condemn the girl, who perhaps has cast a kindly glance at you—since the gods have so made you that you cannot fail to please any woman—and yet who must repel your approaches because she feels herself above being trifled with, even by one of the Cornelia gens, and yet too lowly to dare to hope that a man like you should ever stoop from your height to desire her for a wife.

She has vexed you, of that there can be no doubt; how, I can only guess. If, however, it has been through her repellent pride, that ought not to hurt you, for a woman is like a soldier, who only puts on his armour when he is threatened by an opponent whose weapons he fears."

The recluse had rather whispered than spoken these words, remembering that he had neighbours; and as he ceased the drops stood on his brow, for whenever anything disturbed him he was accustomed to allow his powerful voice to be heard pretty loudly, and it cost him no small effort to moderate it for so long.

Publius had at first looked him in the face, and then had gazed at the ground, and he had heard Serapion to the end without interrupting him; but the colour had flamed in his cheeks as in those of a schoolboy, and yet he was an independent and resolute youth who knew how to conduct himself in difficult straits as well as a man in the prime of life. In all his proceedings he was wont to know very well, exactly

what he wanted, and to do without any fuss or comment whatever he thought right and fitting.

During the anchorite's speech the question had occurred to him, what did he in fact expect or wish of the water-bearer; but the answer was wanting, he felt somewhat uncertain of himself, and his uncertainty and dissatisfaction with himself increased as all that he heard struck him more and more. He became less and less inclined to let himself be thrown over by the young girl who for some days had, much against his will, been constantly in his thoughts, whose image he would gladly have dismissed from his mind, but who, after the recluse's speech, seemed more desirable than ever.

"Perhaps you are right," he replied after a short silence, and he too lowered his voice, for a subdued tone generally provokes an equally subdued answer. "You know the maiden better than I, and if you describe her correctly it would be as well that I should abide by my decision and fly from Egypt, or, at any rate,

from your protégées, since nothing lies before me but a defeat or a victory, which could bring me nothing but repentance. Klea avoided my eye to-day as if it shed poison like a viper's tooth, and I can have nothing more to do with her; still, might I be informed how she came into this temple? and if I can be of any service to her, I will—for your sake. Tell me now what you know of her and what you wish me to do."

The recluse nodded assent and beckoned Publius to come closer to him, and bowing down to speak into the Roman's ear, he said softly:

"Are you in favour with the Queen?" Publius, having said that he was, Serapion, with an exclamation of satisfaction, began his story.

"You learned this morning how I myself came into this cage, and that my father was overseer of the temple granaries. While I was wandering abroad he was deposed from his office, and would probably have died in prison, if a worthy man had not assisted him to save

his honour and his liberty. All this does not concern you, and I may therefore keep it to myself; but this man was the father of Klea and Irene, and the enemy by whose instrumentality my father suffered innocently was the villain Eulæus. You know—or perhaps indeed you may not know—that the priests have to pay a certain tribute for the king's maintenance; you know? To be sure, you Romans trouble yourselves more about matters of law and administration than the culture of the arts or the subtleties of thought. Well, it was my father's duty to pay these customs over to Eulæus, who received them; but the beardless effeminate vermin, the glutton—may every peach he ever ate or ever is to eat turn to poison!—kept back half of what was delivered to him, and when the accountants found nothing but empty air in the king's stores where they hoped to find corn and woven goods, they raised an alarm, which of course came to the ears of the powerful thief at court before it reached those of my poor father. You called

Egypt a marvellous country, or something like it; and so in truth it is, not merely on account of the great piles there that you call Pyramids and such like, but because things happen here which in Rome would be as impossible as moonshine at mid-day, or a horse with his tail at the end of his nose! Before a complaint could be laid against Eulæus he had accused my father of the peculation, and before the Epistates and the assessor of the district had even looked at the indictment, their judgment on the falsely accused man was already recorded, for Eulæus had simply bought their verdict just as a man buys a fish or a cabbage in the market. In olden times the goddess of justice was represented in this country with her eyes shut, but now she looks round on the world like a squinting woman who winks at the king with one eye, and glances with the other at the money in the hand of the accuser or the accused. My poor father was of course condemned and thrown into prison, where he was beginning to doubt the justice of the gods, when for his sake the

greatest wonder happened, ever seen in this land of wonders since first the Greeks ruled in Alexandria. An honourable man undertook without fear of persons the lost cause of the poor condemned wretch, and never rested till he had restored him to honour and liberty. But imprisonment, disgrace and indignation had consumed the strength of the ill-used man as a worm eats into cedar-wood, and he fell into a decline and died. His preserver, Klea's father, as the reward of his courageous action fared even worse; for here by the Nile virtues are punished in this world, as crimes are with you. Where injustice holds sway frightful things occur, for the gods seem to take the side of the wicked. Those who do not hope for a reward in the next world, if they are neither fools nor philosophers—which often comes to the same thing—try to guard themselves against any change in this.

“Philotas, the father of the two girls, whose parents were natives of Syracuse, was an adherent of the doctrines of Zeno—which have

many supporters among you at Rome too—and he was highly placed as an official, for he was president of the Chrematistoi, a college of judges which probably has no parallel out of Egypt, and which has been kept up better than any other. It travels about from province to province stopping in the chief towns to administer justice. When an appeal is brought against the judgment of the court of justice belonging to any place—over which the Epistles of the district presides—the case is brought before the Chrematistoi, who are generally strangers alike to the accuser and accused; by them it is tried over again, and thus the inhabitants of the provinces are spared the journey to Alexandria or—since the country has been divided—to Memphis, where, besides, the supreme court is overburdened with cases.

“No former president of the Chrematistoi had ever enjoyed a higher reputation than Philotas. Corruption no more dared approach him than a sparrow dare go near a falcon, and he was as wise as he was just, for he was no

less deeply versed in the ancient Egyptian law than in that of the Greeks, and many a corrupt judge reconsidered matters as soon as it became known that he was travelling with the Chrematistoi, and passed a just instead of an unjust sentence.

“Cleopatra, the widow of Epiphanes, while she was living and acting as guardian of her sons Philometor and Euergetes—who now reign in Memphis and Alexandria—held Philotas in the highest esteem and conferred on him the rank of ‘relation to the king’; but she was just dead when this worthy man took my father’s cause in hand, and procured his release from prison.

“The scoundrel Eulæus and his accomplice Lenæus then stood at the height of power, for the young king, who was not yet of age, let himself be led by them like a child by his nurse.

“Now as my father was an honest man, no one but Eulæus could be the rascal, and as the Chrematistoi threatened to call him before their

tribunal the miserable creature stirred up the war in Cœlo-Syria against Antiochus Epiphanes, the king's uncle.

"You know how disgraceful for us was the course of that enterprise, how Philometor was defeated near Pelusium, and by the advice of Eulæus escaped with his treasure to Samothrace, how Philometor's brother Euergetes was set up as king in Alexandria, how Antiochus took Memphis, and then allowed his elder nephew to continue to reign here as though he were his vassal and ward.

"It was during this period of humiliation, that Eulæus was able to evade Philotas, whom he may very well have feared, as though his own conscience walked the earth on two legs in the person of the judge, with the sword of justice in his hand, and telling all men what a scoundrel he was.

"Memphis had opened her gates to Antiochus without offering much resistance, and the Syrian King, who was a strange man and was fond of mixing among the people as if he him-

self were a common man, applied to Philotas, who was as familiar with Egyptian manners and customs as with those of Greece, in order that he might conduct him into the halls of justice and into the market-places; and he made him presents as was his way, sometimes of mere rubbish and sometimes of princely gifts.

“Then when Philometor was freed by the Romans from the protection of the Syrian King, and could govern in Memphis as an independent sovereign, Eulæus accused the father of these two girls of having betrayed Memphis into the hands of Antiochus, and never rested till the innocent man was deprived of his wealth, which was considerable, and sent with his wife to forced labour in the gold mines of Ethiopia.

When all this occurred I had already returned to my cage here; but I heard from my brother Glaucus—who was captain of the watch in the palace, and who learned a good many things before other people did—what was going on out there, and I succeeded in having the

daughters of Philotas secretly brought to this temple, and preserved from sharing their parents' fate. That is now five years ago, and now you know how it happens, that the daughters of a man of rank carry water for the altar of Serapis, and that I would rather an injury should be done to me than to them, and that I would rather see Eulæus eating some poisonous root than fragrant peaches."

"And is Philotas still working in the mines?" asked the Roman, clenching his teeth with rage.

"Yes, Publius," replied the anchorite. "A 'yes' that it is easy to say, and it is just as easy too to clench one's fists in indignation—but it is hard to imagine the torments that must be endured by a man like Philotas, and a noble and innocent woman—as beautiful as Here and Aphrodite in one—when they are driven to hard and unaccustomed labour under a burning sun by the lash of the overseer. Perhaps by this time they have been happy enough to die under their sufferings and their daughters

are already orphans, poor children! No one here but the high priest knows precisely who they are, for if Eulæus were to learn the truth he would send them after their parents as surely as my name is Serapion."

"Let him try it!" cried Publius, raising his right fist threateningly.

"Softly, softly, my friend," said the recluse, "and not now only, but about every thing which you undertake in behalf of the sisters, for a man like Eulæus hears not only with his own ears but with those of a thousand others, and almost every thing that occurs at Court has to go through his hands as epistolographer. You say the Queen is well-disposed towards you. That is worth a great deal, for her husband is said to be guided by her will, and such a thing as Eulæus cannot seem particularly estimable in Cleopatra's eyes if princesses are like other women—and I know them well."

"And even if he were," interrupted Publius with glowing cheeks, "I would bring him to ruin all the same, for a man like Philotas must

not perish, and his cause henceforth is my own. Here is my hand upon it; and if I am happy in having descended from a noble race it is above all because the word of a son of the Cornelii is as good as the accomplished deed of any other man."

The recluse grasped the right hand the young man gave him and nodded to him affectionately, his eyes radiant, though moistened with joyful emotion. Then he hastily turned his back on the young man, and soon reappeared with a large papyrus roll in his hand.

"Take this," he said, handing it to the Roman, "I have here set forth all that I have told you, fully and truly with my own hand in the form of a petition. Such matters, as I very well know, are never regularly conducted to an issue at Court unless they are set forth in writing. If the Queen seems disposed to grant you a wish give her this roll, and entreat her for a letter of pardon. If you can effect this, all is won."

Publius took the roll, and once more gave his hand to the anchorite, who, forgetting himself for a moment, shouted out in his loud voice:

“May the gods bless thee, and by thy means work the release of the noblest of men from his sufferings! I had quite ceased to hope, but if you come to our aid all is not yet wholly lost.”

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## CHAPTER VI.

“PARDON me if I disturb you.”

With these words the anchorite’s final speech was interrupted by Eulæus, who had come in to the Pastophorium softly and unobserved, and who now bowed respectfully to Publius.

“May I be permitted to enquire on what compact one of the noblest of the sons of Rome is joining hands with this singular personage?”

“You are free to ask,” replied Publius shortly and drily, “but every one is not disposed to answer, and on the present occasion I am not. I will bid you farewell, Serapion, but not for long I believe.”

“Am I permitted to accompany you?” asked Eulæus.

“You have followed me without any permission on my part.”

“I did so by order of the King, and am only

fulfilling his commands in offering you my escort now."

"I shall go on, and I cannot prevent your following me."

"But I beg of you," said Eulæus, "to consider that it would ill-become me to walk behind you like a servant."

"I respect the wishes of my host, the King, who commanded you to follow me," answered the Roman. "At the door of the temple however you can get into your chariot, and I into mine; an old courtier must be ready to carry out the orders of his superior."

"And does carry them out," answered Eulæus with deference, but his eyes twinkled—as the forked tongue of a serpent is rapidly put out and still more rapidly withdrawn—with a flash first of threatening hatred, and then another of deep suspicion cast at the roll the Roman held in his hand.

Publius heeded not this glance, but walked quickly towards the acacia grove; the recluse looked after the ill-matched pair, and as

he watched the burly Eulæus following the young man, he put both his hands on his hips, puffed out his fat cheeks, and burst into loud laughter as soon as the couple had vanished behind the acacias.

When once Serapion's midriff was fairly tickled it was hard to reduce it to calm again, and he was still laughing when Klea appeared in front of his cell some few minutes after the departure of the Roman. He was about to receive his young friend with a cheerful greeting, but, glancing at her face, he cried anxiously:

“You look as if you had met with a ghost; your lips are pale instead of red, and there are dark shades round your eyes. What has happened to you, child? Irene went with you to the procession, that I know. Have you had bad news of your parents? You shake your head. Come, child, perhaps you are thinking of some one more than you ought; how the colour rises in your cheeks! Certainly handsome Publius, the Roman, must have looked into your eyes—

a splendid youth is he—a fine young man—a capital good fellow—”

“Say no more on that subject,” Klea exclaimed, interrupting her friend and protector, and waving her hand in the air as if to cut off the other half of Serapion’s speech. “I can hear nothing more about him.”

“Has he addressed you unbecomingly?” asked the recluse.

“Yes!” said Klea, turning crimson, and with a vehemence quite foreign to her usual gentle demeanour, “yes, he persecutes me incessantly with challenging looks.”

“Only with looks?” said the anchorite. “But we may look even at the glorious sun and at the lovely flowers as much as we please, and they are not offended.”

“The sun is too high and the soulless flowers too humble for a man to hurt them,” replied Klea. “But the Roman is neither higher nor lower than I, the eye speaks as plain a language as the tongue, and what his eyes demand of me brings the blood to my cheeks

and stirs my indignation even now when I only think of it."

"And that is why you avoid his gaze so carefully?"

"Who told you that?"

"Publius himself; and because he is wounded by your hard-heartedness he meant to quit Egypt; but I have persuaded him to remain, for if there is a mortal living from whom I expect any good for you and yours—"

"It is certainly not he," said Klea positively. "You are a man, and perhaps you now think that so long as you were young and free to wander about the world you would not have acted differently from him—it is a man's privilege; but if you could look into my soul or feel with the heart of a woman, you would think differently. Like the sand of the desert which is blown over the meadows and turns all the fresh verdure to a hideous brown—like a storm that transforms the blue mirror of the sea into a crisped chaos of black whirlpools and foaming ferment; this man's imperious audacity has

cruelly troubled my peace of heart. Four times his eyes pursued me in the processions; yesterday I still did not recognise my danger, but to-day—I must tell you, for you are like a father to me, and who else in the world can I confide in?—to-day I was able to avoid his gaze, and yet all through long endless hours of the festival I felt his eyes constantly seeking mine. I should have been certain I was under no delusion, even if Publius Scipio—but what business has his name on my lips?—even if the Roman had not boasted to you of his attacks on a defenceless girl. And to think that you, you of all others, should have become his ally! But you would not, no indeed you would not, if you knew how I felt at the procession while I was looking down at the ground, and knew that his very look desecrated me like the rain that washed all the blossoms off the young vine-shoots last year. It was just as if he were drawing a net round my heart—but, oh! what a net! It was as if the flax on a distaff had been set on fire, and the flames spun out into

thin threads, and the meshes knotted of the fiery yarn. I felt every thread and knot burning into my soul, and could not cast it off nor even defend myself. Aye! you may look grieved and shake your head, but so it was, and the scars hurt me still with a pain I cannot utter."

"But Klea," interrupted Serapion, "you are quite beside yourself—like one possessed. Go to the temple and pray, or, if that is of no avail, go to Asclepios or Anubis and have the demon cast out."

"I need none of your gods!" answered the girl in great agitation. "Oh! I wish you had left me to my fate, and that we had shared the lot of our parents, for what threatens us here is more frightful than having to sift gold-dust in the scorching sun, or to crush quartz in mortars. I did not come to you to speak about the Roman, but to tell you what the high-priest had just disclosed to me since the procession ended."

"Well?" asked Serapion eager and almost

frightened, stretching out his neck to put his head near to the girl's, and opening his eyes so wide that the loose skin below them almost disappeared.

"First he told me," replied Klea, "how meagrely the revenues of the temple are supplied—"

"That is quite true," interrupted the ancho-rite, "for Antiochus carried off the best part of its treasure; and the crown, which always used to have money to spare for the sanctuaries of Egypt, now loads our estates with heavy tribute; but you, as it seems to me, were kept scantily enough, worse than meanly, for, as I know—since it passed through my hands—a sum was paid to the temple for your main-tenance which would have sufficed to keep ten hungry sailors, not speak of two little pecking birds like you, and besides that you do hard service without any pay. Indeed it would be a more profitable speculation to steal a beggar's rags than to rob you! Well, what did the high-priest want?"

"He says that we have been fed and protected by the priesthood for five years, that now some danger threatens the temple on our account, and that we must either quit the sanctuary or else make up our minds to take the place of the twin-sisters Arsinoë and Doris who have hitherto been employed in singing the hymns of lamentation, as Isis and Nephthys, by the bier of the deceased God on the occasion of the festivals of the dead, and in pouring out the libations with wailing and outcries when the bodies were brought into the temple to be blessed. These maidens, Asclepiodorus says, are now too old and ugly for these duties, but the temple is bound to maintain them all their lives. The funds of the temple are insufficient to support two more serving maidens besides them and us, and so Arsinoë and Doris are only to pour out the libations for the future, and we are to sing the laments, and do the wailing."

"But you are not twins!" cried Serapion. "And none but twins—so say the ordinances—may mourn for Osiris as Isis and Nephthys."

"They will make twins of us!" said Klea with a scornful turn of her lip. "Irene's hair is to be dyed black like mine, and the soles of her sandals are to be made thicker to make her as tall as I am."

"They would hardly succeed in making you smaller than you are, and it is easier to make light hair dark than dark hair light," said Sera-pion with hardly suppressed rage. "And what answer did you give to these exceedingly original proposals?"

"The only one I could very well give. I said no—but I declared myself ready, not from fear, but because we owe much to the temple, to perform any other service with Irene, only not this one."

"And Asclepiodorus?"

"He said nothing unkind to me, and preserved his calm and polite demeanour when I contradicted him, though he fixed his eyes on me several times in astonishment as if he had discovered in me something quite new and strange. At last he went on to remind me how

much trouble the temple singing-master had taken with us, how well my low voice went with Irene's high one, how much applause we might gain by a fine performance of the hymns of lamentation, and how he would be willing, if we undertook the duties of the twin sisters, to give us a better dwelling and more abundant food. I believe he has been trying to make us amenable by supplying us badly with food, just as falcons are trained by hunger. Perhaps I am doing him an injustice, but I feel only too much disposed to-day to think the worst of him and of the other Fathers. Be that as it may ; at any rate he made me no farther answer when I persisted in my refusal, but dismissed me with an injunction to present myself before him again in three days' time, and then to inform him definitively whether I would conform to his wishes, or if I proposed to leave the temple. I bowed and went towards the door, and was already on the threshold when he called me back once more, and said: 'Remember your parents and their fate!' He spoke solemnly,

almost threateningly, but he said no more and hastily turned his back on me. What could he mean to convey by this warning? Every day and every hour I think of my father and mother, and keep Irene in mind of them."

The recluse at these words sat muttering thoughtfully to himself for a few minutes with a discontented air; then he said gravely:

"Asclepiodorus meant more by his speech than you think. Every sentence with which he dismisses a refractory subordinate is a nut of which the shell must be cracked in order to get at the kernel. When he tells you to remember your parents and their sad fate, such words from his lips, and under the present circumstances, can hardly mean anything else than this: that you should not forget how easily your father's fate might overtake you also, if once you withdrew yourselves from the protection of the temple. It was not for nothing that Asclepiodorus—as you yourself told me quite lately, not more than a week ago I am sure—reminded you how often those condemned to forced

labour in the mines had their relations sent after them. Ah! child, the words of Asclepiodorus have a sinister meaning. The calmness and pride, with which you look at me make me fear for you, and yet, as you know, I am not one of the timid and tremulous. Certainly what they propose to you is repulsive enough, but submit to it; it is to be hoped it will not be for long. Do it for my sake and for that of poor Irene, for though you might know how to assert your dignity and take care of yourself outside these walls in the rough and greedy world, little Irene never could. And besides, Klea, my sweetheart, we have now found some one, who makes your concerns his, and who is great and powerful—but oh! what are three days? To think of seeing you turned out—and then that you may be driven with a dissolute herd in a filthy boat down to the burning south, and dragged to work which kills first the soul and then the body! No, it is not possible! You will never let this happen to me—and to yourself and Irene; no, my darling, no, my pet, my

sweetheart, you cannot, you will not do so. Are you not my children, my daughters, my only joy? and you, would you go away, and leave me alone in my cage, all because you are so proud!"

The strong man's voice failed him, and heavy drops fell from his eyes one after another down his beard, and on to Klea's arm, which he had grasped with both hands.

The girl's eyes too were dim with a mist of warm tears when she saw her rough friend weeping, but she remained firm and said, as she tried to free her hand from his:

"You know very well, father Serapion, that there is much to tie me to this temple; my sister, and you, and the door-keeper's child, little Philo. It would be cruel, dreadful to have to leave you; but I would rather endure that and every other grief than allow Irene to take the place of Arsinoë or that black Doris as wailing woman. Think of that bright child, painted and kneeling at the foot of a bier and groaning and

wailing in mock sorrow! She would become a living lie in human form, an object of loathing to herself, and to me—who stand in the place of a mother to her—from morning till night a martyrising reproach! But what do I care about myself—I would disguise myself as the goddess without even making a wry face, and be led to the bier, and wail and groan so that every hearer would be cut to the heart, for my soul is already possessed by sorrow; it is like the eyes of a man, who has gone blind from the constant flow of salt tears. Perhaps singing the hymns of lamentation might relieve my soul, which is as full of sorrow as an overbrimming cup; but I would rather that a cloud should for ever darken the sun, that mists should hide every star from my eyes, and the air I breathe be poisoned by black smoke than disguise her identity, and darken her soul, or let her clear laugh be turned to shrieks of lamentation, and her fresh and childlike spirit be buried in gloomy mourning. Sooner will I go away with her and leave even you, to perish with my

parents in misery and anguish than see that happen, or suffer it for a moment."

As she spoke Serapion covered his face with his hands, and Klea, hastily turning away from him, with a deep sigh returned to her room.

Irene was accustomed when she heard her step to hasten to meet her, but to-day no one came to welcome her, and in their room, which was beginning to be dark as twilight fell, she did not immediately catch sight of her sister, for she was sitting all in a heap in a corner of the room, her face hidden in her hands and weeping quietly.

"What is the matter?" asked Klea, going tenderly up to the weeping child, over whom she bent, endeavouring to raise her.

"Leave me," said Irene sobbing; she turned away from her sister with an impatient gesture, repelling her caress like a perverse child; and then, when Klea tried to soothe her by affectionately stroking her hair, she sprang up passionately exclaiming through her tears:

"I could not help crying—and, from this hour, I must always have to cry. The Corinthian Lysias spoke to me so kindly after the procession, and you—you don't care about me at all and leave me alone all this time in this nasty dusty hole! I declare I will not endure it any longer, and if you try to keep me shut up, I will run away from this temple, for outside it is all bright and pleasant, and here it is dingy and horrid!"

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## CHAPTER VII.

IN the very midst of the white wall with its bastions and ramparts, which formed the fortifications of Memphis, stood the old Palace of the Kings, a stately structure built of bricks, recently plastered, and with courts, corridors, chambers and halls without number, and verandah-like out-buildings of gaily-painted wood, and a magnificent pillared banqueting hall in the Greek style. It was surrounded by verdurous gardens, and a whole host of labourers tended the flower beds and shady alleys, the shrubs and the trees; kept the tanks clean and fed the fish in them; guarded the beast-garden, in which quadrupeds of every kind, from the heavy-treading elephant to the light-footed antelope, were to be seen, associated with birds innumerable of every country and climate.

A light white vapour rose from the splen-

didly fitted bath house, loud barkings resounded from the dog-kennels, and from the long array of open stables came the neighing of horses with the clatter and stamp of hoofs, and the rattle of harness and chains. A semicircular building of new construction adjoining the old palace was the Theatre, and many large tents for the body-guard, for ambassadors and scribes, as well as others serving as banqueting halls for the various court officials, stood both within the garden and outside its enclosing walls. A large space leading from the city itself to the royal citadel was given up to the soldiers, and there, by the side of the shady court yards, were the houses of the police-guard and the prisons. Other soldiers were quartered in tents close to the walls of the palace itself.

The clatter of their arms and the words of command, given in Greek, by their captain, sounded out at this particular instant, and up into the part of the buildings occupied by the Queen; and her apartments were high up, for in summer time Cleopatra preferred to live in

airy tents, which stood among the broad-leaved trees of the south and whole groves of flowering shrubs, on the level roof of the palace, which was also lavishly decorated with marble statues. There was only one way of access to this retreat, which was fitted up with regal splendour; day and night it was fanned by currents of soft air, and no one could penetrate uninvited to disturb the Queen's retirement, for veteran guards watched at the foot of the broad stair that led to the roof, chosen from the Macedonian "Garde noble," and owing as implicit obedience to Cleopatra as to the King himself. This select corps was now, at sunset, relieving guard, and the Queen could hear the words spoken by the officers in command and the clatter of the shields against the swords as they rattled on the pavement, for she had come out of her tent into the open air, and stood gazing towards the west, where the glorious hues of the sinking sun flooded the bare, yellow limestone range of the Libyan hills, with their innumerable tombs and the separate groups of

Pyramids; while the wonderful colouring gradually tinged with rose-colour the light silvery clouds that hovered in the clear sky over the valley of Memphis, and edged them as with a rim of living gold.

The Queen stepped out of her tent, accompanied by a young Greek girl—the fair Zoë, daughter of her master of the hunt Zenodotus, and Cleopatra's favourite lady-in-waiting—but though she looked towards the west, she stood unmoved by the magic of the glorious scene before her; she screened her eyes with her hand to shade them from the blinding rays, and said:

“Where can Cornelius be staying! When we mounted our chariots before the temple he had vanished, and as far as I can see the road in the quarters of Sokari and Serapis I can not discover his vehicle, nor that of Eulæus who was to accompany him. It is not very polite of him to go off in this way without taking leave; nay, I could call it ungrateful, since I had proposed to tell him on our way home

all about my brother Euergetes, who has arrived to-day with his friends. They are not yet acquainted, for Euergetes was living in Cyrene when Publius Cornelius Scipio landed in Alexandria. Stay! do you see a black shadow out there by the vineyard at Kakem? That is very likely he; but no—you are right, it is only some birds, flying in a close mass above the road. Can you see nothing more? No! and yet we both have sharp young eyes. I am very curious to know whether Publius Scipio will like Euergetes. There can hardly be two beings more unlike, and yet they have some very essential points in common."

"They are both men," interrupted Zoë, looking at the Queen as if she expected cordial assent to this proposition.

"So they are," said Cleopatra proudly. "My brother is still so young that, if he were not a king's son, he would hardly have outgrown the stage of boyhood, and would be a lad among other Epheboi,\* and yet among the oldest there

\* Youths above 18 were so called.

is hardly a man who is his superior in strength of will and determined energy. Already, before I married Philometor, he had clutched Alexandria and Cyrene, which by right should belong to my husband, who is the eldest of us three, and that was not very brotherly conduct—and indeed we had other grounds for being angry with him; but when I saw him again for the first time after nine months of separation I was obliged to forget them all, and welcome him as though he had done nothing but good to me and his brother—who is my husband, as is the custom of the families of Pharaohs and the usage of our race. He is a young Titan, and no one would be astonished if he one day succeeded in piling Pelion upon Ossa. I know well enough how wild he can often be, how unbridled and recalcitrant beyond all bounds; but I can easily pardon him, for the same bold blood flows in my own veins, and at the root of all his excesses lies power, genuine and vigorous power. And this innate pith and power are just the very thing we most admire in men, for it is the

one gift which the gods have dealt out to us with a less liberal hand than to men. Life indeed generally dams its over-flowing current, but I doubt whether this will be the case with the stormy torrent of his energy; at any rate men such as he is rush swiftly onwards, and are strong to the end, which sooner or later is sure to overtake them; and I infinitely prefer such a wild torrent to a shallow brook flowing over a plain, which hurts no one, and which in order to prolong its life loses itself in a misty bog. He, if any one, may be forgiven for his tumultuous career; for when he pleases my brother's great qualities charm old and young alike, and are as conspicuous and as remarkable as his faults—nay, I will frankly say his crimes. And who in Greece or Egypt surpasses him in grasp and elevation of mind?"

"You may well be proud of him," replied Zoë. "Not even Publius Scipio himself can soar to the height reached by Euergetes."

"But, on the other hand, Euergetes is not gifted with the steady, calm self-reliance of Cor-

nelius. The man, who should unite, in one person the good qualities of those two, need yield the palm, as it seems to me, not even to a god!"

"Among us imperfect mortals he would indeed be the only perfect one," replied Zoë. "But the gods could not endure the existence of a perfect man, for then they would have to undertake the undignified task of competing with one of their own creatures."

"Here, however, comes one whom no one can accuse!" cried the young Queen, as she hastened to meet a richly dressed woman, older than herself, who came towards her leading her son, a pale child of two years old. She bent down to the little one, tenderly but with impetuous eagerness, and was about to clasp him in her arms, but the fragile child, which at first had smiled at her, was startled; he turned away from her and tried to hide his little face in the dress of his nurse—a lady of rank—to whom he clung with both hands. The Queen threw herself on her knees before him, took hold of his shoulder, and partly

by coaxing and partly by insistence strove to induce him to quit the sheltering gown and to turn to her; but although the lady, his wet-nurse, seconded her with kind words of encouragement, the terrified child began to cry, and resisted his mother's caresses with more and more vehemence the more passionately she tried to attract and conciliate him. At last the nurse lifted him up, and was about to hand him to his mother, but the wilful little boy cried more than before, and throwing his arms convulsively round his nurse's neck he broke into loud cries.

In the midst of this rather unbecoming struggle of the mother against the child's obstinacy, the clatter of wheels and of horses' hoofs rang through the court yard of the palace, and hardly had the sound reached the Queen's ears than she turned away from the screaming child, hurried to the parapet of the roof, and called out to Zoë:

“Publius Scipio is here; it is high time that I should dress for the banquet. Will that

naughty child not listen to me at all? Take him away, Praxinoa, and understand distinctly that I am much dissatisfied with you. You estrange my own child from me to curry favour with the future king. That is base, or else it proves that you have no tact, and are incompetent for the office entrusted to you. The office of wet nurse you duly fulfilled, but I shall now look out for another attendant for the boy. Do not answer me! no tears! I have had enough of that with the child's screaming."

With these words, spoken loudly and passionately, she turned her back on Praxinoa—the wife of a distinguished Macedonian noble, who stood as if petrified—and retired into her tent, where branched lamps had just been placed on little tables of elegant workmanship. Like all the other furniture in the Queen's dressing-tent these were made of gleaming ivory, standing out in fine relief from the tent-cloth which was sky-blue woven with silver lilies and ears of corn, and from the tiger-skins which covered all the cushions, while white woollen carpets,

bordered with a waving scroll in blue, were spread on the ground.

The Queen threw herself on a seat in front of her dressing-table, and sat staring at herself in a mirror, as if she now saw her face and her abundant, reddish-fair hair for the first time; then she said, half turning to Zoë and half to her favourite Athenian waiting maid, who stood behind her with her other woman:

“It was folly to dye my dark hair light; but now it may remain so, for Publius Scipio, who has no suspicion of our arts, thought this colour pretty and uncommon, and never will know its origin. That Egyptian head-dress with the vulture’s head which the king likes best to see me in, the young Greek Lysias and the Roman too, call barbaric, and so every one must call it who is not interested in the Egyptians. But to-night we are only ourselves, so I will wear the chaplet of golden corn with sapphire grapes. Do you think, Zoë, that with that I could wear the dress of transparent bombyx silk that came yesterday from Cos? But no, I

will not wear that, for it is too slight a tissue, it hides nothing and I am now too thin for it to become me. All the lines in my throat show, and my elbows are quite sharp—altogether I am much thinner. That comes of incessant worry, annoyance, and anxiety. How angry I was yesterday at the council, because my husband will always give way and agree and try to be pleasant; whenever a refusal is necessary I have to interfere, unwilling as I am to do it, and odious as it is to me always to have to stir up discontent, disappointment, and disaffection, to take things on myself and to be regarded as hard and heartless in order that my husband may preserve undiminished the doubtful glory of being the gentlest and kindest of men and princes. My son's having a will of his own leads to agitating scenes, but even that is better than that Philopator should rush into every body's arms. The first thing in bringing up a boy should be to teach him to say 'no.' I often say 'yes' myself when I should not, but I am a woman, and yielding becomes us better

than refusal—and what is there of greater importance to a woman than to do what becomes her best, and to seem beautiful?

“I will decide on this pale dress, and put over it the net-work of gold thread with sapphire knots; that will go well with the head-dress. Take care with your comb, Thais, you are hurting me! Now—I must not chatter any more. Zoë, give me the roll yonder; I must collect my thoughts a little before I go down to talk among men at the banquet. When we have just come from visiting the realm of death and of Serapis, and have been reminded of the immortality of the soul and of our lot in the next world, we are glad to read through what the most estimable of human thinkers has said concerning such things. Begin here, Zoë.”

Cleopatra’s companion, thus addressed, signed to the unoccupied waiting-women to withdraw, seated herself on a low cushion opposite the Queen, and began to read with an intelligent and practised intonation; the reading went on for some time uninterrupted by any sound but

the clink of metal ornaments, the rustle of rich stuffs, the trickle of oils or perfumes as they were dropped into the crystal bowls, the short and whispered questions of the women who were attiring the Queen, or Cleopatra's no less low and rapid answers.

All the waiting-women not immediately occupied about the Queen's person—perhaps twenty in all, young and old—ranged themselves along the sides of the great tent, either standing or sitting on the ground or on cushions, and awaiting the moment when it should be their turn to perform some service, as motionless as though spell-bound by the mystical words of a magician. They only made signs to each other with their eyes and fingers, for they knew that the Queen did not choose to be disturbed when she was being read to, and that she never hesitated to cast aside any thing or any body that crossed her wishes or inclinations, like a tight shoe or a broken lute-string.

Her features were irregular and sharp, her

cheek-bones too strongly developed, and the lips, behind which her teeth gleamed pearly white—though too widely set—were too full; still, so long as she exerted her great powers of concentration, and listened with flashing eyes, like those of a prophetess, and parted lips to the words of Plato, her face had worn an indescribable glow of feeling, which seemed to have come upon her from a higher and better world, and she had looked far more beautiful than now when she was fully dressed, and when her women crowded round her—Zoë having laid aside the Plato—with loud and unmeasured flattery.

Cleopatra delighted in being thus fêted, and, in order to enjoy the adulation of a throng, she would always when dressing have a great number of women to attend her toilet; mirrors were held up to her on every side, a fold set right, and the jewelled straps of her sandals adjusted.

One praised the abundance of her hair, another the slenderness of her form, the slimness of her ankles, and the smallness of her tiny hands and feet. One maiden remarked to an-

other—but loud enough to be heard—on the brightness of her eyes which were clearer than the sapphires on her brow, while the Athenian waiting-woman, Thais, declared that Cleopatra had grown fatter, for her golden belt was less easy to clasp than it had been ten days previously.

The Queen presently signed to Zoë, who threw a little silver ball into a bowl of the same metal, elaborately wrought and decorated, and in a few minutes the tramp of the body-guard was audible outside the door of the tent.

Cleopatra went out, casting a rapid glance over the roof—now brightly illuminated with cressets and torches—and the white marble statues that gleamed out in relief against the dark clumps of shrubs; and then, without even looking at the tent where her children were asleep, she approached the litter, which had been brought up to the roof for her by the young Macedonian nobles. Zoë and Thais assisted her to mount into it, and her ladies, waiting-women, and others who had hurried out of the

other tents, formed a row on each side of the way, and hailed their mistress with loud cries of admiration and delight as she passed by, lifted high above them all on the shoulders of her bearers. The diamonds in the handle of her feather fan sparkled brightly as Cleopatra waved a gracious adieu to her women, an adieu which did not fail to remind them how infinitely beneath her were those she greeted. Every movement of her hand was full of regal pride, and her eyes, unveiled and untempered, were radiant with a young woman's pleasure in a perfect toilet, with satisfaction in her own person, and with the anticipation of the festive hours before her.

The litter disappeared behind the door of the broad steps that led up to the roof, and Thais, sighing softly, said to herself, "If only for once I could ride through the air in just such a pretty shell of coloured and shining mother-of-pearl, like a goddess! carried aloft by young men, and hailed and admired by all around me! High up there the growing Selene

floats calmly and silently by the tiny stars, and just so did She ride past in her purple robe with her torch-bearers and flames and lights—past us humble creatures, and between the tents to the banquet—and to what a banquet, and what guests! Every thing up here greets her with rejoicing, and I could almost fancy that among those still marble statues even the stern face of Zeno had parted its lips, and spoken flattering words to her. And yet poor little Zoë, and the fair-haired Lysippa, and the black-haired daughter of Demetrius, and even I, poor wretch, should be handsomer, far handsomer than she, if we could dress ourselves with fine clothes and jewels for which kings would sell their kingdoms; if we could play Aphrodite as she does, and ride off in a shell borne aloft on emerald green glass to look as if it were floating on the waves; if dolphins set with pearls and turquoises served us for a footstool, and white ostrich plumes floated over our heads, like the silvery clouds that float over Athens in the sky of a fine spring-day. The transparent

tissue that she dared not put on would well become me! If only that were true which Zoë was reading yesterday, that the souls of men were destined to visit the earth again and again in new forms! Then perhaps mine might some day come into the world in that of a king's child. I should not care to be a prince, so much is expected of him, but a princess indeed! That would be lovely!"

These and such like were Thais' dreams, while Zoë stood outside the tent of the royal children with her cousin, the chief-attendant of prince Philopator, carrying on an eager conversation in a low tone. The child's nurse from time to time dried her eyes and sobbed bitterly as she said:

"My own baby, my other children, my husband and our beautiful house in Alexandria—I left them all to suckle and rear a prince. I have sacrificed happiness, freedom, and my nights' sleep for the sake of the Queen and of this child, and how am I repaid for all this? As if

I were a low-born wench instead of the daughter and wife of noble men; this woman, half a child still, scarcely yet nineteen, dismisses me from her service before you and all her ladies every ten days! And why? Because the ungoverned blood of her race flows in her son's veins, and because he does not rush into the arms of a mother who for days does not ask for him at all, and never troubles herself about him but in some idle moment when she has gratified every other whim. Princes distribute favour or disgrace with justice only so long as they are children. The little one understands very well what I am to him, and sees what Cleopatra is. If I could find it in my heart to ill-use him in secret, this mother—who is not fit to be a mother—would soon have her way. Hard as it would be to me so soon to leave the poor feeble little child, who has grown as dear to my soul as my own—aye and closer, even closer, as I may well say—this time I will do it, even at the risk of Cleopatra's plunging us into ruin, my husband and me, as she has done

to so many who have dared to contravene her will."

The wet nurse wept aloud, but Zoë laid her hand on the distressed woman's shoulder, and said soothingly:

"I know you have more to submit to from Cleopatra's humours than any of us all, but do not be over-hasty. To-morrow she will send you a handsome present, as she so often has done after being unkind; and though she vexes and hurts you again and again, she will try to make up for it again and again till, when this year is over, your attendance on the prince will be at an end, and you can go home again to your own family. We all have to practise patience; we live like people dwelling in a ruinous house with to-day a stone and to-morrow a beam threatening to fall upon our heads. If we each take calmly whatever befalls us our masters try to heal our wounds, but if we resist may the gods have mercy on us! for Cleopatra is like a strung bow, which sets the arrow flying as soon as a child, a mouse, a breath of air even

touches it—like an overfull cup which brims over if a leaf, another drop, a single tear falls into it. We should, any one of us, soon be worn out by such a life, but she needs excitement, turmoil and amusement at every hour. She comes home late from a feast, spends barely six hours in disturbed slumber, and has hardly rested so long as it takes a pebble to fall to the ground from a crane's claw before we have to dress her again for another meal. From the council board she goes to hear some learned discourse, from her books in the temple to sacrifice and prayer, from the sanctuary to the workshops of artists, from pictures and statues to the audience-chamber, from a reception of her subjects and of foreigners to her writing-room, from answering letters to a procession and worship once more, from the sacred services back again to her dressing-tent, and there, while she is being attired, she listens to me while I read the most profound works—and how she listens! not a word escapes her, and her memory retains whole sentences. Amid all

this hurry and scurry her spirit must need be like a limb that is sore from violent exertion, and that is painfully tender to every rough touch. We are to her neither more nor less than the wretched flies which we hit at when they trouble us, and may the gods be merciful to those on whom this Queen's hand may fall! Euergetes cleaves with the sword all that comes in his way, Cleopatra stabs with the dagger, and her hand wields the united power of her own might and of her yielding husband's. Do not provoke her. Submit to what you cannot avert; just as I never complain when, if I make a mistake in reading, she snatches the book from my hand, or flings it at my feet. But I, of course, have only myself to fear for, and you have your husband and children as well."

Praxinoa bowed her head at these words in sad assent, and said:

"Thank you for those words! I always think only from my heart, and you mostly from your head. You are right, this time again there is nothing for me to do but to be patient; but

when I have fulfilled the duties here, which I undertook, and am at home again, I will offer a great sacrifice to Asclepias and Hygiea, like a person recovered from a severe illness; and one thing I know: that I would rather be a poor girl, grinding at a mill, than change with this rich and adored Queen who, in order to enjoy her life to the utmost, carelessly and restlessly hurries past all that our mortal lot has best to offer. Terrible, hideous to me seems such an existence with no rest in it! and the heart of a mother which is so much occupied with other things that she cannot win the love of her child, which blossoms for every hired nurse, must be as waste as the desert! Rather would I endure anything—everything—with patience than be such a Queen!"

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## CHAPTER VIII.

“WHAT! No one to come to meet me?” asked the Queen, as she reached the foot of the last flight of porphyry steps that led into the antechamber to the banqueting hall, and, looking round, with an ominous glance, at the chamberlains who had accompanied her, she clinched her small fist. “I arrive and find no one here!”

The “No one” certainly was a figure of speech, since more than a hundred body-guards—Macedonians in rich array of arms—and an equal number of distinguished court officials were standing on the marble flags of the vast hall, which was surrounded by colonnades, while the star-spangled night-sky was all its roof; and the court attendants were all men of rank, dignified by the titles of fathers, brothers, relatives, friends and chief-friends of the King.

These all received the Queen with a many-voiced "Hail!" but not one of them seemed worthy of Cleopatra's notice. This crowd was less to her than the air we breathe in order to live—a mere obnoxious vapour, a whirl of dust which the traveller would gladly avoid, but which he must nevertheless encounter in order to proceed on his way.

The Queen had expected that the few guests, invited by her selection and that of her brother Euergetes to the evening's feast, would have welcomed her here at the steps; she thought they would have seen her—as she felt herself—like a goddess borne aloft in her shell, and that she might have exulted in the admiring astonishment of the Roman and of Lysias, the Corinthian; and now the most critical instant in the part she meant to play that evening had proved a failure, and it suggested itself to her mind that she might be borne back to her roof-tent, and be floated down once more when she was sure of the presence of the company. But there was one

thing she dreaded more even than pain and remorse, and that was any appearance of the ridiculous; so she only commanded the bearers to stand still, and while the master of the ceremonies, waiving his dignity, hurried off to announce to her husband that she was approaching, she signed to the nobles highest in rank to approach, that she might address a few gracious words to them, with distant amiability. Only a few however, for the doors of thyia wood leading into the banqueting hall itself, presently opened, and the King with his friends came forward to meet Cleopatra.

“How were we to expect you so early?” cried Philometor to his wife.

“Is it really still early?” asked the Queen, “or have I only taken you by surprise, because you had forgotten to expect me?”

“How unjust you are!” replied the King. “Must you now be told that, come as early as you will, you always come too late for my desires.”

“But for ours,” cried Lysias, “neither too

early nor too late, but at the very right time —like returning health and happiness, or the victor's crown."

"Health as taking the place of sickness?" asked Cleopatra, and her eyes sparkled keenly and merrily.

"I perfectly understand Lysias," said Publius, intercepting the Greek. "Once, on the field of Mars, I was flung from my horse, and had to lie for weeks on my couch, and I know that there is no more delightful sensation than that of feeling our departed strength returning as we recover. He means to say that in your presence we must feel exceptionally well."

"Nay rather," interrupted Lysias, "our Queen seems to come to us like returning health, since so long as she was not in our midst we felt suffering and sick for longing. Thy presence, Cleopatra, is the most effectual remedy, and restores us to our lost health."

Cleopatra politely lowered her fan, as if in thanks, thus rapidly turning the stick of it in her hand, so as to make the diamonds that

were set in it sparkle and flash. Then she turned to the friends, and said:

“Your words are most amiable, and your different ways of expressing your meaning remind me of two gems set in a jewel, one of which sparkles because it is skilfully cut, and reflects every light from its mirror-like facets, while the other shines by its genuine and intrinsic fire. The genuine and the true are one, and the Egyptians have but one word for both, and your kind speech, my Scipio—but I may surely venture to call you *Publius*—your kind speech, my *Publius*, seems to me to be truer than that of your accomplished friend, which is better adapted to vainer ears than mine. Pray, give me your hand.”

The shell in which she was sitting was gently lowered, and, supported by *Publius* and her husband, the Queen alighted and entered the banqueting hall, accompanied by her guests.

As soon as the curtains were closed, and when Cleopatra had exchanged a few whispered

words with her husband, she turned again to the Roman, who had just been joined by Eulæus, and said:

“You have come from Athens, Publius, but you do not seem to have followed very closely the courses of Logic there, else how could it be that you, who regard health as the highest good—that you, who declared you never felt so well as in my presence—should have quitted me so promptly after the procession, and in spite of our appointment? May I be allowed to ask what business—”

“Our noble friend,” answered Eulæus, bowing low, but not allowing the Queen to finish her speech, “would seem to have found some particular charm in the bearded recluses of Serapis, and to be seeking among them the key-stone of his studies at Athens.”

“In that he is very right,” said the Queen. “For from them he can learn to direct his attention to that third division of our existence, concerning which least is taught in Athens—I mean the future—”

"That is in the hands of the gods," replied the Roman. "It will come soon enough, and I did not discuss it with the anchorite. Eulæus may be informed that, on the contrary, everything I learned from that singular man in the Serapeum bore reference to the things of the past."

"But how can it be possible," said Eulæus, "that any one to whom Cleopatra had offered her society should think so long of anything else than the beautiful present?"

"You indeed have good reason," retorted Publius quickly, "to enter the lists in behalf of the present, and never willingly to recall the past."

"It was full of anxiety and care," replied Eulæus with perfect self-possession. "That my sovereign lady must know from her illustrious mother, and from her own experience; and she will also protect me from the undeserved hatred with which certain powerful enemies seem minded to pursue me. Permit me, your Majesty, not to make my appearance at the banquet

until later. This noble gentleman kept me waiting for hours in the Serapeum, and the proposals concerning the new building in the temple of Isis at Philæ must be drawn up fair to-day, in order that they may be brought to-morrow before your royal husband in council and your illustrious brother Euergetes—”

“You have leave,” interrupted Cleopatra.

As soon as Eulæus had disappeared, the Queen went closer up to Publius, and said:

“You are annoyed with this man—well, he is not pleasant, but at any rate he is useful and worthy. May I ask whether you only feel his personality repugnant to you, or whether actual circumstances have given rise to your aversion—nay, if I have judged rightly, to a very bitterly hostile feeling against him?”

“Both,” replied Publius. “In this unmanly man, from the very first, I expected to find nothing good, and I now know that, if I erred at all, it was in his favour. To-morrow I will ask you to spare me an hour when I can communicate to your Majesty something concerning

him, but which is too repulsive and sad to be suitable for telling in an evening devoted to enjoyment. You need not be inquisitive, for they are matters that belong to the past, and which concern neither you nor me."

The high steward and the cup-bearer here interrupted this conversation by calling them to table, and the royal pair were soon reclining with their guests at the festal board.

Oriental splendour and Greek elegance were combined in the decorations of the saloon of moderate size, in which Ptolemy Philometor was wont to prefer to hold high festival with a few chosen friends. Like the great reception hall and the men's hall—with its twenty doors and lofty porphyry columns—in which the King's guests assembled, it was lighted from above, since it was only at the sides that the walls—which had no windows—and a row of graceful alabaster columns with Corinthian acanthus-capitals supported a narrow roof; the centre of the hall was quite uncovered. At this hour, when it was blazing with hundreds of lights, the large open-

ing, which by day admitted the bright sunshine, was closed over by a gold net-work, decorated with stars and a crescent moon of rock-crystal, and the meshes were close enough to exclude the bats and moths which at night always fly to the light. But the illumination of the King's banqueting hall made it almost as light as day, consisting of numerous lamps with many branches held up by lovely little figures of children in bronze and marble. Every joint was plainly visible in the mosaic of the pavement, which represented the reception of Heracles into Olympus, the feast of the gods, and the astonishment of the amazed hero at the splendour of the celestial banquet; and hundreds of torches were reflected in the walls of polished yellow marble, brought from Hippo Regius; these were inlaid by skilled artists with costly stones, such as lapis lazuli and malachite, crystals, blood-stone, jasper, agates and chalcedony, to represent fruit-pieces and magnificent groups of game or of musical instruments; while the pilasters were decorated with masks

of the tragic and comic Muses, torches, thyrsi wreathed with ivy and vine, and pan-pipes. These were wrought in silver and gold, and set with costly marbles, and they stood out from the marble background like metal work on a leather shield, or the rich ornamentation on a sword-sheath. The figures of a Dionysiac procession, forming the frieze, looked down upon the feasters—a fine rilievo that had been designed and modelled for Ptolemy Soter by the sculptor Bryaxis, and then executed in ivory and gold.

Everything that met the eye in this hall was splendid, costly, and above all of a genial aspect, even before Cleopatra had come to the throne; and she—here as in her own apartments—had added the busts of the greatest Greek philosophers and poets, from Thales of Miletus down to Strato, who raised Chance to fill the throne of god, and from Hesiod to Callimachus; she too had placed the tragic mask side by side with the comic, for at her table—she was wont to say—she desired to see no one who

could not enjoy grave and wise discourse more than eating, drinking, and laughter.

Instead of assisting at the banquet, as other ladies used, seated on a chair or at the foot of her husband's couch, she reclined on a couch of her own, behind which stood busts of Sappho the poetess, and Aspasia the friend of Pericles.

Though she made no pretensions to be regarded as a philosopher nor even as a poetess, she asserted her right to be considered a finished connoisseur in the arts of poetry and music; and if she preferred reclining to sitting how should she have done otherwise, since she was fully aware how well it became her to extend herself in a picturesque attitude on her cushions, and to support her head on her arm as it rested on the back of her couch; for that arm, though not strictly speaking beautiful, always displayed the finest specimens of Alexandrian workmanship in gem-cutting and goldsmiths' work.

But, in fact, she selected a reclining posture particularly for the sake of showing her feet;

not a woman in Egypt or Greece had a smaller or more finely formed foot than she. For this reason her sandals were so made that when she stood or walked they protected only the soles of her feet, and her slender white toes with the roseate nails and their polished white half-moons were left uncovered.

At the banquet she put off her shoes altogether, as the men did; hiding her feet at first however, and not displaying them till she thought the marks left on her tender skin by the straps of the sandals had completely disappeared.

Eulæus was the greatest admirer of these feet; not, as he averred, on account of their beauty, but because the play of the Queen's toes showed him exactly what was passing in her mind, when he was quite unable to detect what was agitating her soul in the expression of her mouth and eyes, well practised in the arts of dissimulation.

Nine couches, arranged three and three in a horse-shoe, invited the guests to repose, with their arms of ebony and cushions of dull olive-

green brocade, on which a delicate pattern of gold and silver seemed just to have been breathed.

The Queen, shrugging her shoulders, and, as it would seem, by no means agreeably surprised at something, whispered to the chamberlain, who then indicated to each guest the place he was to occupy. To the right of the central group reclined the Queen, and her husband took his place to the left; the couch between the royal pair, destined for their brother Euergetes, remained unoccupied.

On one of the three couches which formed the right-hand angle with those of the royal family, Publius found a place next to Cleopatra; opposite to him, and next the King, was Lysias the Corinthian. Two places next to him remained vacant, while on the side by the Roman reclined the brave and prudent Hierax, the friend of Ptolemy Euergetes and his most faithful follower.

While the servants strewed the couches with rose-leaves, sprinkled perfumed waters,

and placed by the couch of each guest a small table—made of silver and of a slab of fine, reddish-brown porphyry, veined with white—the King addressed a pleasant greeting to each guest, apologising for the smallness of the number.

“Eulæus,” he said, “has been forced to leave us on business, and our royal brother is still sitting over his books with Aristarchus, who came with him from Alexandria; but he promised certainly to come.”

“The fewer we are,” replied Lysias, bowing low, “the more honourable is the distinction of belonging to so limited a number of your Majesty’s most select associates.”

“I certainly think we have chosen the best from among the good,” said the Queen. “But even the small number of friends I had invited must have seemed too large to my brother Euergetes, for he—who is accustomed to command in other folks’ houses as he does in his own—forbid the chamberlain to invite our learned friends—among whom Agatharchides, my brothers’ and my own most worthy tutor, is

known to you—as well as our Jewish friends who were present yesterday at our table, and whom I had set down on my list. I am very well satisfied however, for I like the number of the Muses; and perhaps he desired to do you, Publius, particular honour, since we are assembled here in the Roman fashion. It is in your honour, and not in his, that we have no music this evening; you said that you did not particularly like it at a banquet. Euergetes himself plays the harp admirably. However, it is well that he is late in coming as usual, for the day after to-morrow is his birthday, and he is to spend it here with us and not in Alexandria; the priestly delegates assembled in the Bruchion are to come from thence to Memphis to wish him joy, and we must endeavour to get up some brilliant festival. You have no love for Eulæus, Publius, but he is extremely skilled in such matters, and I hope he will presently return to give us his advice."

"For the morning we will have a grand procession," cried the King. "Euergetes delights

in a splendid spectacle, and I should be glad to show him how much pleasure his visit has given us."

The King's fine features wore a most winning expression as he spoke these words with heart-felt warmth, but his sister said thoughtfully:

"Aye! if only we were in Alexandria—but here, among all the Egyptian people—"

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## CHAPTER IX.

A LOUD laugh re-echoing from the marble walls of the state room interrupted the Queen's speech; at first she started, but then smiled with pleasure as she recognised her brother Euergetes, who, pushing aside the chamberlains, approached the company with an elderly Greek, who walked by his side.

"By all the dwellers on Olympus! By the whole rabble of gods and beasts that live in the temples by the Nile!" cried the new comer, again laughing so heartily that not only his fat cheeks but his whole immensely stout young frame swayed and shook. "By your pretty little feet, Cleopatra, which could so easily be hidden, and yet are always to be seen—by all your gentle virtues, Philometor, I believe you are trying to outdo the great Philadelphus or our Syrian uncle Antiochus, and to get up a

most unique procession; and in my honour! Just so! I myself will take a part in the wonderful affair, and my sturdy person shall represent Eros with his quiver and bow. Some Aethiopian dame must play the part of my mother Aphrodite; she will look the part to perfection, rising from the white sea-foam with her black skin. And what do you think of a Pallas with short woolly hair; of the Charites with broad, flat Aethiopian feet; and an Egyptian, with his shaven head mirroring the sun, as Phœbus Apollo?"

With these words the young giant of twenty years threw himself on the vacant couch between his brother and sister, and, after bowing, not without dignity, to the Roman, whom his brother named to him, he called one of the young Macedonians of noble birth who served at the feast as cup-bearers, had his cup filled once and again and yet a third time, drinking it off quickly and without setting it down; then he said in a loud tone, while he pushed his hands through his tossed, light brown hair, till

it stood straight up in the air from his broad temples and high brow:

"I must make up for what you have had before I came.—Another cup-full Diocleides."

"Wild boy!" said Cleopatra, holding up her finger at him half in jest and half in grave warning. "How strange you look!"

"Like Silenus without the goat's hoofs," answered Euergetes. "Hand me a mirror here, Diocleides; follow the eyes of her Majesty the Queen, and you will be sure to find one. There is the thing! And in fact the picture it shows me does not displease me. I see there a head on which besides the two crowns of Egypt a third might well find room, and in which there is so much brains that they might suffice to fill the skulls of four kings to the brim. I see two vulture's eyes which are always keen of sight even when their owner is drunk, and that are in danger of no peril save from the flesh of these jolly cheeks, which, if they continue to increase so fast, must presently exclude the light, as the growth of the wood encloses a piece of

money stuck into a rift in a tree—or as a shutter, when it is pushed to, closes up a window. With these hands and arms the fellow I see in the mirror there could, at need, choke a hippopotamus; the chain that is to deck this neck must be twice as long as that worn by a well-fed Egyptian priest. In this mirror I see a man, who is moulded out of a sturdy clay, baked out of more unctuous and solid stuff than other folks; and if the fine creature there on the bright surface wears a transparent robe, what have you to say against it, Cleopatra? The Ptolemaic princes must protect the import trade of Alexandria, that fact was patent even to the great son of Lagus; and what would become of our commerce with Cos if I did not purchase the finest bombyx stuffs, since those who sell it make no profits out of you, the Queen—and you cover yourself, like a vestal virgin, in garments of tapestry. Give me a wreath for my head—aye and another to that, and new wine in the cup! To the glory of Rome and to your health, Publius Cornelius

Scipio, and to our last critical conjecture, my Aristarchus—to subtle thinking and deep drinking!"

"To deep thinking and subtle drinking!" retorted the person thus addressed, while he raised the cup, looked into the wine with his twinkling eyes and lifted it slowly to his nose—a long, well-formed and slightly aquiline nose—and to his thin lips.

"Oho! Aristarchus," exclaimed Euergetes, and he frowned. "You please me better when you clear up the meaning of your poets and historians than when you criticise the drinking-maxims of a king. Subtle drinking is mere sipping, and sipping I leave to the bitterns and other birds that live content among the reeds. Do you understand me? Among reeds, I say—whether cut for writing, or no."

"By subtle drinking," replied the great critic with perfect indifference, as he pushed the thin, grey hair from his high brow with his slender hand. "By subtle drinking I mean the drinking of choice wine, and did you ever taste anything

more delicate than this juice of the vines of Anthylla that your illustrious brother has set before us? Your paradoxical axiom commends you at once as a powerful thinker and as the benevolent giver of the best of drinks."

"Happily turned," exclaimed Cleopatra, clapping her hands, "you here see, Publius, a proof of the promptness of an Alexandrian tongue."

"Yes!" said Euergetes, "if men could go forth to battle with words instead of spears the masters of the Museum in Alexander's city, with Aristarchus at their head, they might rout the united armies of Rome and Carthage in a couple of hours."

"But we are not now in the battle-field but at a peaceful meal," said the king, with suave amiability. "You did in fact overhear our secret Euergetes, and mocked at my faithful Egyptians, in whose place I would gladly set fair Greeks if only Alexandria still belonged to me instead of to you.—However, a splendid proces-

sion shall not be wanting at your birthday festival."

"And do you really still take pleasure in these eternal goose-step performances?" asked Euergetes, stretching himself out on his couch, and folding his hands to support the back of his head. "Sooner could I accustom myself to the delicate drinking of Aristarchus than sit for hours watching these empty pageants. On two conditions only can I declare myself ready and willing to remain quiet, and patiently to dawdle through almost half a day, like an ape in a cage: First, if it will give our Roman friend Publius Cornelius Scipio any pleasure to witness such a performance—though, since our uncle Antiochus pillaged our wealth, and since we brothers shared Egypt between us, our processions are not to be even remotely compared to the triumphs of Roman victors—or, secondly, if I am allowed to take an active part in the affair."

"On my account, Sire," replied Publius, "no procession need be arranged, particularly

not such a one as I should here be obliged to look on at."

"Well! I still enjoy such things," said Cleopatra's husband. "Well-arranged groups, and the populace pleased and excited are a sight I am never tired of."

"As for me," cried Cleopatra, "I often turn hot and cold, and the tears even spring to my eyes, when the shouting is loudest. A great mass of men all uniting in a common emotion always has a great effect. A drop, a grain of sand, a block of stone are insignificant objects, but millions of them together, forming the sea, the desert or the pyramids, constitute a sublime whole. One man alone, shouting for joy, is like a madman escaped from an asylum, but when thousands of men rejoice together it must have a powerful effect on the coldest heart. How is it that you, Publius Scipio, in whom a strong will seems to me to have found a peculiarly happy development, can remain unmoved by a scene in which the great collective will of a people finds its utterance?"

"Is there then any expression of will, think you," said the Roman, "in this popular rejoicing? It is just in such circumstances that each man becomes the involuntary mimic and duplicate of his neighbour; while I love to make my own way, and to be independent of everything but the laws and duties laid upon me by the state to which I belong."

"And I," said Euergetes, "from my childhood have always looked on at processions from the very best places, and so it is that fortune punishes me now with indifference to them and to everything of the kind; while the poor miserable devil who can never catch sight of anything more than the nose or the tip of a hair or the broad back of those who take part in them, always longs for fresh pageants. As you hear, I need have no consideration for Publius Scipio in this, willing as I should be to do so. Now what would you say, Cleopatra, if I myself took a part in my procession—I say mine, since it is to be in my honour; that really would be for once something new and amusing."

"More new and amusing than creditable, I think," replied Cleopatra drily.

"And yet even that ought to please you," laughed Euergetes. "Since, besides being your brother, I am your rival, and we would sooner see our rivals lower themselves than rise."

"Do not try to justify yourself by such words," interrupted the King evasively, and with a tone of regret in his soft voice. "We love you truly; we are ready to yield you your dominion side by side with ours, and I beg you to avoid such speeches even in jest, so that by-gones may be bygones."

"And," added Cleopatra, "not to detract from your dignity as a king and your fame as a sage by any such fool's pranks."

"Madam teacher, do you know then what I had in my mind? I would appear as Alcibiades, followed by a train of flute-playing women, with Aristarchus to play the part of Socrates. I have often been told that he and I resemble each other—in many points, say the

more sincere; in every point, say the more polite of my friends."

At these words Publius measured with his eye the frame of the royal young libertine, enveloped in transparent robes; and recalling to himself, as he gazed, a glorious statue of that favourite of the Athenians, which he had seen in the Ilissus, an ironical smile passed over his lips. It was not unobserved by Euergetes and it offended him, for there was nothing he liked better than to be compared to the nephew of Pericles; but he suppressed his annoyance, for Publius Cornelius Scipio was the nearest relative of the most influential men of Rome, and, though he himself wielded royal power, Rome exercised over him the sovereign will of a divinity.

Cleopatra noticed what was passing in her brother's mind, and in order to interrupt his farther speech and to divert his mind to fresh thoughts, she said cheerfully:

"Let us then give up the procession, and think of some other mode of celebrating your

birthday. You, Lysias, must be experienced in such matters, for Publius tells me that you were the leader in all the Games of Corinth. What can we devise to entertain Euergetes and ourselves?"

The Corinthian looked for a moment into his cup, moving it slowly about on the marble slab of the little table at his side, between an oyster pasty and a dish of fresh asparagus; and then he said, glancing round to win the suffrages of the company:

"At the great procession which took place under Ptolemy Philadelphus—Agatharchides gave me the description of it, written by the eye-witness Kallixenus, to read only yesterday—all kinds of scenes from the lives of the gods were represented before the people. Suppose we were to remain in this magnificent palace, and to represent ourselves the beautiful groups which the great artists of the past have produced in painting or sculpture; but let us choose those only that are least known."

"Splendid," cried Cleopatra in great excite-

ment, "who can be more like Heracles than my mighty brother there—the very son of Alcmene, as Lysippus has conceived and represented him? Let us then represent the life of Heracles from grand models, and in every case assign to Euergetes the part of the hero."

"Oh! I will undertake it," said the young king, feeling the mighty muscles of his breast and arms, "and you may give me great credit for assuming the part, for the demi-god who strangled the snakes was lacking in the most important point, and it was not without due consideration that Lysippus represented him with a small head on his mighty body; but I shall not have to say anything."

"If I play Omphale will you sit at my feet?" asked Cleopatra.

"Who would not be willing to sit at those feet?" answered Euergetes. "Let us at once make farther choice among the abundance of subjects offered to us; but, like Lysias, I would warn you against those that are too well known."

"There are no doubt things commonplace to the eye as well as to the ear," said Cleopatra. "But what is recognised as good is commonly regarded as most beautiful."

"Permit me," said Lysias, "to direct your attention to a piece of sculpture in marble of the noblest workmanship, which is both old and beautiful, and yet which may be known to few among you. It exists on the cistern of my father's house at Corinth, and was executed many centuries since by a great artist of the Peloponnesus. Publius was delighted with the work, and it is in fact beautiful beyond description. It is an exquisite representation of the marriage of Heracles and Hebe—of the hero, raised to divinity, with semipiternal Youth. Will your Majesty allow yourself to be led by Pallas Athene and your mother Alcmene to your nuptials with Hebe?"

"Why not?" said Euergetes. "Only the Hebe must be beautiful. But one thing must be considered; how are we to get the cistern from your father's house at Corinth to this place by

to-morrow or next day? Such a group cannot be posed from memory without the original to guide us; and though the story runs that the statue of Serapis flew from Sinope to Alexandria, and though there are magicians still at Memphis—”

“We shall not need them,” interrupted Publius, “while I was staying as a guest in the house of my friend’s parents—which is altogether more magnificent than the old castle of King Gyges at Sardis—I had some gems engraved after this lovely group, as a wedding present for my sister. They are extremely successful, and I have them with me in my tent.”

“Have you a sister?” asked the Queen, leaning over towards the Roman. “You must tell me all about her.”

“She is a girl like all other girls,” replied Publius, looking down at the ground, for it was most repugnant to his feelings to speak of his sister in the presence of Euergetes.

“And you are unjust like all other brothers,”

said Cleopatra smiling, "and I must hear more about her, for"—and she whispered the words and looked meaningly at Publius—"all that concerns you must interest me."

During this dialogue the royal brothers had addressed themselves to Lysias with questions as to the marriage of Heracles and Hebe, and all the company were attentive to the Greek as he went on:

"This fine work does not represent the marriage properly speaking, but the moment when the bridegroom is led to the bride. The hero, with his club on his shoulder, and wearing the lion's skin, is led by Pallas Athene, who, in performing this office of peace, has dropped her spear and carries her helmet in her hand; they are accompanied by his mother Alcmene, and are advancing towards the bride's train. This is headed by no less a personage than Apollo himself, singing the praises of Hymenæus to a lute. With him walks his sister Artemis and behind them the mother of Hebe, accompanied by Hermes, the messenger of the gods, as the

envoy of Zeus. Then follows the principal group, which is one of the most lovely works of Greek art that I am acquainted with. Hebe comes forward to meet her bridegroom, gently led on by Aphrodite, the Queen of Love. Peitho, the goddess of persuasion, lays her hand on the bride's arm, imperceptibly urging her forward and turning away her face; for what she had to say has been said, and she smiles to herself, for Hebe has not turned a deaf ear to her voice, and he who has once listened to Peitho must do what she desires."

"And Hebe?" asked Cleopatra.

"She casts down her eyes, but lifts up the arm on which the hand of Peitho rests with a warning movement of her fingers, in which she holds an unopened rose, as though she would say: 'Ah! let me be—I tremble at the man'—or ask: 'Would it not be better that I should remain as I am and not yield to your temptations and to Aphrodite's power?' Oh! Hebe is exquisite, and you, O Queen! must represent her!"

"I!" exclaimed Cleopatra. "But you said her eyes were cast down."

"That is from modesty and timidity, and her gait must also be bashful and maidenly. Her long robe falls to her feet in simple folds, while Peitho holds hers up saucily, between her fore finger and thumb, as if stealthily dancing with triumph over her recent victory. Indeed the figure of Peitho would become you admirably."

"I think I will represent Peitho," said the Queen interrupting the Corinthian. "Hebe is but a bud, an unopened blossom, while I am a mother, and I flatter myself I am something of a philosopher—"

"And can with justice assure yourself," interrupted Aristarchus, "that with every charm of youth you also possess the characters attributed to Peitho, the goddess, who can work her spells not only on the heart but on the intellect also. The maiden bud is as sweet to look upon as the rose, but he who loves not merely colour but perfume too—I mean re-

freshment, emotion and edification of spirit—must turn to the full-blown flower; as the rose-growers of lake Mœris twine only the buds of their favourite flower into wreaths and bunches, but cannot use them for extracting the oil of imperishable fragrance; for that they need the expanded blossom. Represent Peitho, my Queen! the goddess herself might be proud of such a representative."

"And if she were so indeed," cried Cleopatra, "how happy am I to hear such words from the lips of Aristarchus. It is settled—I play Peitho. My companion Zoë may take the part of Artemis, and her grave sister that of Pallas Athene. For the mother's part we have several matrons to choose from; the eldest daughter of Epitropes appears to me fitted for the part of Aphrodite; she is wonderfully lovely."

"Is she stupid too?" asked Euergetes. "That is also an attribute of the ever-smiling Cypria."

"Enough so, I think, for our purpose,"

laughed Cleopatra. "But where are we to find such a Hebe as you have described, Lysias? The daughter of Ahmes the Arabarch is a charming child."

"But she is brown, as brown as this excellent wine, and too thoroughly Egyptian," said the high steward, who superintended the young Macedonian cup-bearers; he bowed deeply as he spoke, and modestly drew the Queen's attention to his own daughter, a maiden of sixteen. But Cleopatra objected, that she was much taller than herself, and that she would have to stand by the Hebe, and lay her hand on her arm.

Other maidens were rejected on various grounds, and Euergetes had already proposed to send off a carrier pigeon to Alexandria to command that some fair Greek girl should be sent by an express quadriga to Memphis—where the dark Egyptian gods and men flourish, and are more numerous than the fair race of Greeks—when Lysias exclaimed:

"I saw to-day the very girl we want, a Hebe

that might have stepped out from the marble group at my father's, and have been endued with life and warmth and colour by some god. Young, modest, rose and white, and just about as tall as your Majesty. If you will allow me, I will not tell you who she is, till after I have been to our tent to fetch the gems with the copies of the marble."

"You will find them in an ivory casket at the bottom of my clothes-chest," said Publius; "here is the key."

"Make haste," cried the Queen, "for we are all curious to hear where in Memphis you discovered your modest, rose and white Hebe."

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## CHAPTER X.

\*AN hour had slipped by with the royal party, since Lysias had quitted the company; the wine-cups had been filled and emptied many times; Eulæus had rejoined the feasters, and the conversation had taken quite another turn, since the whole of the company were not now equally interested in the same subject; on the contrary, the two kings were discussing with Aristarchus the manuscripts of former poets and of the works of the sages, scattered throughout Greece, and the ways and means of obtaining them or of acquiring exact transcripts of them for the library of the Museum. Hierax was telling Eulæus of the last Dionysiac festival, and of the representation of the newest comedy in Alexandria, and Eulæus assumed the appearance—not unsuccessfully—of listening with both ears, interrupting him several

times with intelligent questions, bearing directly on what he had said, while in fact his attention was exclusively directed to the Queen, who had taken entire possession of the Roman Publius, telling him in a low tone of her life—which was consuming her strength—of her unsatisfied affections, and her enthusiasm for Rome and for manly vigour. As she spoke her cheeks glowed and her eyes sparkled, for the more exclusively she kept the conversation in her own hands the better she thought she was being entertained; and Publius, who was nothing less than talkative, seldom interrupted her, only insinuating a flattering word now and then when it seemed appropriate; for he remembered the advice given him by the anchorite, and was desirous of winning the good graces of Cleopatra.

In spite of his sharp ears Eulæus could understand but little of their whispered discourse, for King Euergetes' powerful voice sounded loud above the rest of the conversation; but Eulæus was able swiftly to supply the links between the disjointed sentences, and to grasp

the general sense, at any rate, of what she was saying. The Queen avoided wine, but she had the power of intoxicating herself, so to speak, with her own words, and now—just as her brothers and Aristarchus were at the height of their excited and eager question and answer—she raised her cup, touched it with her lips and handed it to Publius, while at the same time she took hold of his.

The young Roman knew well enough all the significance of this hasty action; it was thus that in his own country a woman when in love was wont to exchange her cup with her lover, or an apple already bitten by her white teeth.

Publius was seized with a cold shudder—like a wanderer who carelessly pursues his way gazing up at the moon and stars, and suddenly perceives an abyss yawning at his feet. Recollections of his mother and of her warnings against the seductive wiles of the Egyptian women, and particularly of this very woman, flashed through his mind like lightning; she was looking at him—not royally by any means,

but with anxious and languishing gaze, and he would gladly have kept his eyes fixed on the ground, and have left the cup untouched; but her eye held his fast as though fettering it with ties and bonds; and to put aside the cup seemed to the most fearless son of an unconquered nation a deed too bold to be attempted. Besides, how could he possibly repay this highest favour with an affront that no woman could ever forgive—least of all a Cleopatra?

Aye, many a life's happiness is tossed away and many a sin committed, because the favour of women is a grace that does honour to every man, and that flatters him even when it is bestowed by the unloved and unworthy. For flattery is a key to the heart, and when the heart stands half open the voice of the tempter is never wanting to whisper: "You will hurt her feelings if you refuse."

These were the deliberations which passed rapidly and confusedly through the young Roman's agitated brain, as he took the Queen's cup and set his lips to the same spot that hers

had touched. Then, while he emptied the cup in long draughts, he felt suddenly seized by a deep aversion to the over-talkative, over-dressed and capricious woman before him, who thus forced upon him favours for which he had not sued; and suddenly there rose before his soul the image, almost tangibly distinct, of the humble water-bearer; he saw Klea standing before him and looking far more queenly as, proud and repellent, she avoided his gaze, than the sovereign by his side could ever have done, though crowned with a diadem.

Cleopatra rejoiced to mark his long slow draught, for she thought the Roman meant to imply by it that he could not cease to esteem himself happy in the favour she had shown him. She did not take her eyes off him, and observed with pleasure that his colour changed to red and white; nor did she notice that Eulæus was watching, with a twinkle in his eyes, all that was going on between her and Publius. At last the Roman set down the cup, and tried with some confusion to reply to her question

as to how he had liked the flavour of the wine."

"Very fine—excellent—" at last he stammered out, but he was no longer looking at Cleopatra but at Euergetes, who just then cried out loudly:

"I have thought over that passage for hours, I have given you all my reasons and have let you speak, Aristarchus, but I maintain my opinion, and whoever denies it does Homer an injustice; in this place *siu* must be read instead of *iu*."

Euergetes spoke so vehemently that his voice outshouted all the other guests; Publius however snatched at his words, to escape the necessity for feigning sentiments he could not feel; so he said, addressing himself half to the speaker and half to Cleopatra:

"Of what use can it be to decide whether it is one or the other—*iu* or *siu*. I find many things justifiable in other men that are foreign to my own nature, but I never could understand how an energetic and vigorous man, a

prudent sovereign and stalwart drinker—like you, Euergetes—can sit for hours over flimsy papyrus-rolls, and rack his brains to decide whether this or that in Homer should be read in one way or another."

"You exercise yourself in other things," replied Euergetes. "I consider that part of me which lies within this golden fillet as the best that I have, and I exercise my wits on the minutest and subtlest questions just as I would try the strength of my arms against the sturdiest athletes. I flung five into the sand the last time I did so, and they quake now when they see me enter the gymnasium of Timagetes. There would be no strength in the world if there were no obstacles, and no man would know that he was strong if he could meet with no resistance to overcome. I for my part seek such exercises as suit my idiosyncrasy, and if they are not to your taste I cannot help it. If you were to set these excellently dressed crayfish before a fine horse he would disdain them, and could not understand how foolish men

could find anything palatable that tasted so salt. Salt, in fact, is not suited to all creatures! Men born far from the sea do not relish oysters, while I, being a gourmand, even prefer to open them myself so that they may be perfectly fresh, and mix their liquor with my wine."

"I do not like any very salt dish, and am glad to leave the opening of all marine produce to my servants," answered Publius. "Thereby I save both time and unnecessary trouble."

"Oh! I know!" cried Euergetes. "You keep Greek slaves, who must even read and write for you. Pray is there a market where I may purchase men, who, after a night of carousing, will bear our head-ache for us? By the shores of the Tiber you love many things better than learning."

"And thereby," added Aristarchus, "deprive yourselves of the noblest and subtlest of pleasures, for the purest enjoyment is ever that which we earn at the cost of some pains and effort."

"But all that you earn by this kind of labour," returned Publius, "is petty and unimportant. It puts me in mind of a man who removes a block of stone in the sweat of his brow only to lay it on a sparrow's feather in order that it may not be carried away by the wind."

"And what is great—and what is small?" asked Aristarchus. "Very opposite opinions on that subject may be equally true, since it depends solely on us and our feelings how things appear to us—whether cold or warm, lovely or repulsive—and when Protagoras says that 'man is the measure of all things,' that is the most acceptable of all the maxims of the Sophists; moreover the smallest matter—as you will fully appreciate—acquires an importance all the greater in proportion as the thing is perfect, of which it forms a part. If you slit the ear of a cart-horse, what does it signify? but suppose the same thing were to happen to a thoroughbred horse, a charger that you ride on to battle!"

“A wrinkle or a tooth more or less in the face of a peasant woman matters little, or not at all, but it is quite different in a celebrated beauty. If you scrawl all over the face with which the coarse finger of the potter has decorated a water-jar, the injury to the wretched pot is but small, but if you scratch, only with a needle’s point, that gem with the portraits of Ptolemy and Arsinoë, which clasps Cieopatra’s robe round her fair throat, the richest queen will grieve as though she had suffered some serious loss.

“Now, what is there more perfect or more worthy to be treasured than the noblest works of great thinkers and great poets.

“To preserve them from injury, to purge them from the errors which, in the course of time, may have spotted their immaculate purity, this is our task ; and if we do indeed raise blocks of stone it is not to weight a sparrow’s feather that it may not be blown away, but to seal the door which guards a precious possession, and to preserve a gem from injury.

"The chatter of girls at a fountain is worth nothing but to be wafted away on the winds, and to be remembered by none; but can a son ever deem that one single word is unimportant which his dying father has bequeathed to him as a clue to his path in life? If you yourself were such a son, and your ear had not perfectly caught the parting counsels of the dying—how many talents of silver would you not pay to be able to supply the missing words? And what are immortal works of the great poets and thinkers but such sacred words of warning addressed, not to a single individual, but to all that are not Barbarians, how ever many they may be. They will elevate, instruct, and delight our descendants a thousand years hence as they do us at this day; and they, if they are not degenerate and ungrateful, will be thankful to those who have devoted the best powers of their life to completing and restoring all that our mighty forefathers have said, as it must have originally stood before it was mutilated, and spoiled by carelessness and folly.

“He who, like King Euergetes, puts one syllable in Homer right, in place of a wrong one, in my opinion has done a service to succeeding generations—aye and a great service.”

“What you say,” replied Publius, “sounds convincing, but it is still not perfectly clear to me; no doubt because I learned at an early age to prefer deeds to words. I find it more easy to reconcile my mind to your painful and minute labours when I reflect that to you is entrusted the restoration of the literal tenour of laws, whose full meaning might be lost by a verbal error; or that wrong information might be laid before me as to one single transaction in the life of a friend or of a blood-relation, and it might lie with me to clear him of mistakes and misinterpretation.”

“And what are the works of the great singers of the deeds of the heroes—of the writers of past history, but the lives of our fathers related either with veracious exactness or with poetic adornments?” cried Aristarchus.

"It is to these that my king and companion in study devotes himself with particular zeal."

"When he is neither drinking, nor raving, nor governing, nor wasting his time in sacrificing and processions," interpolated Euergetes. "If I had not been a king perhaps I might have been an Aristarchus; as it is I am but half a king—since half of my kingdom belongs to you, Philometor—and but half a student; for when am I to find perfect quiet for thinking and writing? Everything, everything in me is by halves, for I, if the scale were to turn in my favour"—and here he struck his chest and his forehead, "I should be twice the man I am. I am my whole real self nowhere but at high festivals, when the wine sparkles in the cup, and bright eyes flash from beneath the brows of the flute-players of Alexandria or Cyrene—sometimes too perhaps in council when the risk is great, or when there is something vast and portentous to be done from which my brother and you others, all of you, would shrink—nay per-

haps even the Roman. Aye! so it is—and you will learn to know it."

Euergetes had roared rather than spoken the last words; his cheeks were flushed, his eyes rolled, while he took from his head both the garland of flowers and the golden fillet, and once more pushed his fingers through his hair.

His sister covered her ears with her hands, and said: "You positively hurt me! As no one is contradicting you, and you, as a man of culture, are not accustomed to add force to your assertions, like the Scythians, by speaking in a loud tone, you would do well to save your metallic voice for the farther speech with which it is to be hoped you will presently favour us. We have had to bow more than once already to the strength of which you boast—but now, at a merry feast, we will not think of that, but rather continue the conversation which entertained us, and which had begun so well. This eager defence of the interests which most delight the best of the Hellenes in Alexandria

may perhaps result in infusing into the mind of our friend Publius Scipio—and through him into that of many young Romans—a proper esteem for a line of intellectual effort which he could not have condemned had he not failed to understand it perfectly.

“Very often some striking poetical turn given to a subject makes it, all at once, clear to our comprehension, even when long and learned disquisitions have failed; and I am acquainted with such an one, written by an anonymous author, and which may please you—and you too, Aristarchus. It epitomizes very happily the subject of our discussion. The lines run as follows:

“Behold, the puny Child of Man  
Sits by Time’s boundless sea,  
And gathers in his feeble hand  
Drops of Eternity.

“He overhears some broken words  
Of whispered mystery—  
He writes them in a tiny book  
And calls it ‘History !’

“We owe these verses to an accomplished

friend; another has amplified the idea by adding the two that follow:

“If indeed the puny Child of Man  
 Had not gathered drops from that wide sea,  
 Those small deeds that fill his little span  
 Had been lost in dumb Eternity.

“Feeble is his hand, and yet it dare  
 Seize some drops of that perennial stream;  
 As they fall they catch a transient gleam—  
 Lo! Eternity is mirrored there!

“What are we all but puny children? And those of us who gather up the drops surely deserve our esteem no less than those who spend their lives on the shore of that great ocean in mere play and strife—”

“And love,” threw in Eulæus in a low voice, as he glanced towards Publius.

“Your poet’s verses are pretty and appropriate,” Aristarchus now said, “and I am very happy to find myself compared to the children who catch the falling drops. There was a time—which came to an end, alas! with the great Aristotle—when there were men among the Greeks, who fed the ocean of which you speak

with new tributaries; for the gods had bestowed on them the power of opening new sources, like the magician Moses, of whom Onias, the Jew, was lately telling us, and whose history I have read in the sacred books of the Hebrews. He, it is true—Moses I mean—only struck water from the rock for the use of the body, while to our philosophers and poets we owe inexhaustible springs to refresh the mind and soul. The time is now past which gave birth to such divine and creative spirits; as your Majesties' forefathers recognised full well when they founded the Museum of Alexandria and the Library, of which I am one of the guardians, and which I may boast of having completed with your gracious assistance. When Ptolemy Soter first created the Museum in Alexandria the works of the greatest period could receive no additions in the form of modern writings of the highest class; but he set us—Children of Man, gathering the drops—the task of collecting and of sifting them, of eliminating errors in them—and I think

we have proved ourselves equal to this task.

"It has been said that it is no less difficult to keep a fortune than to deserve it; and so perhaps we, who are merely 'keepers,' may nevertheless make some credit—all the more because we have been able to arrange the wealth we found under our hand, to work it profitably, to apply it well, to elucidate it, and to make it available. When anything new is created by one of our circle we always link it on to the old; and in many departments we have indeed even succeeded in soaring above the ancients, particularly in that of the experimental sciences. The sublime intelligence of our forefathers commanded a broad horizon—our narrower vision sees more clearly the objects that lie close to us. We have discovered the sure path for all intellectual labour, the true scientific method; and an observant study of things as they are, succeeds better with us than it did with our predecessors. Hence it follows that in the provinces of the natural

sciences, in mathematics, astronomy, mechanics and geography the sages of our college have produced works of unsurpassed merit. Indeed the industry of my associates—”

“Is very great,” cried Euergetes. “But they stir up such a dust that all free thought is choked, and because they value quantity above all things in the results they obtain, they neglect to sift what is great from what is small; and so Publius Scipio and others like him, who shrug their shoulders over the labours of the learned, find cause enough to laugh in their faces. Out of every four of you I should dearly like to set three to some handicraft, and I shall do it too, one of these days—I shall do it, and turn them and all their miserable paraphernalia out of the Museum, and out of my capital. They may take refuge with you, Philometer, you who marvel at everything you cannot do yourself, who are always delighted to possess what I reject, and to make much of those whom I condemn—and Cleopatra I daresay will play the harp, in honour of their entering Memphis.”

"I daresay!" answered the Queen, laughing bitterly. "Still, it is to be expected that your wrath may fall even on worthy men. Until then I will practise my music, and study the treatise on harmony that you have begun writing. You are giving us proof to-day of how far you have succeeded in attaining unison in your own soul."

"I like you in this mood!" cried Euergetes. "I love you, sister, when you are like this! It ill becomes the eagle's brood to coo like the dove, and you have sharp talons though you hide them never so well under your soft feathers. It is true that I am writing a treatise on harmony, and I am doing it with delight; still it is one of those phenomena which, though accessible to our perception, are imperishable, for no god even could discover it entire and unmixed in the world of realities. Where is Harmony to be found in the struggles and rapacious strife of the life of the Kosmos? And our human existence is but the diminished reflection of that process of birth and decease, of evolution and

annihilation, which is going on in all that is perceptible to our senses; now gradually and invisibly, now violently and convulsively, but never harmoniously.

“Harmony is at home only in the ideal world—Harmony which is unknown even among the gods—Harmony, whom I may know, and yet may never comprehend—whom I love, and may never possess—whom I long for, and who flies from me.

“I am as one that thirsteth, and Harmony as the remote, unattainable well—I am as one swimming in a wide sea, and she is the land which recedes as I deem myself near to it.

“Who will tell me the name of the country where she rules as queen, undisturbed and untroubled? And which is most in earnest in his pursuit of the fair one: He who lies sleeping in her arms, or he who is consumed by his passion for her?

“I am seeking what you deem that you possess.—Possess!—

“Look round you on the world and on life

—look round, as I do, on this hall of which you are so proud! It was built by a Greek; but, because the simple melody of beautiful forms in perfect concord no longer satisfies you, and your taste requires the eastern magnificence in which you were born, because this flatters your vanity and reminds you, each time you gaze upon it, that you are wealthy and powerful—you commanded your architect to set aside simple grandeur, and to build this gaudy monstrosity, which is no more like the banqueting hall of a Pericles than I or you, Cleopatra, in all our finery, are like the simply clad gods and goddesses of Phidias. I mean not to offend you, Cleopatra, but I must say this; I am writing now on the subject of Harmony, and perhaps I shall afterwards treat of Justice, Truth, Virtue; although I know full well that they are pure abstractions which occur neither in nature nor in human life, and which in my dealings I wholly set aside; nevertheless they seem to me worthy of investigation, like any other delusion, if by resolving it we may arrive at con-

ditional truth. It is because one man is afraid of another that these restraints—justice, truth, and what else you will—have received these high-sounding names, have been stamped as characteristics of the gods, and placed under the protection of the immortals; nay, our anxious care has gone so far that it has been taught as a doctrine that it is beautiful and good to cloud our free enjoyment of existence for the sake of these illusions. Think of Antisthenes and his disciples, the dog-like Cynics—think of the fools shut up in the temple of Serapis! Nothing is beautiful but what is free, and he only is not free who is for ever striving to check his inclinations—for the most part in vain—in order to live, as feeble cowards deem virtuously, justly and truthfully.

“One animal eats another when he has succeeded in capturing it, either in open fight or by cunning and treachery; the climbing plant strangles the tree, the desert-sand chokes the meadows, stars fall from heaven, and earthquakes swallow up cities. You believe in the

gods—and so do I after my own fashion—and if they have so ordered the course of this life in every class of existence that the strong triumph over the weak, why should not I use my strength, why let it be fettered by those much-belauded soporifics which our prudent ancestors concocted to cool the hot blood of such men as I, and to paralyse our sinewy fists.

“Euergetes—the well-doer—I was named at my birth; but if men choose to call me Kakkergetes—the evil-doer—I do not mind it, since what you call good I call narrow and petty, and what you call evil is the free and unbridled exercise of power. I would be anything rather than lazy and idle, for everything in nature is active and busy; and as, with Aristippus, I hold pleasure to be the highest good, I would fain earn the name of having enjoyed more than all other men; in the first place in my mind, but no less in my body which I admire and cherish.”

During this speech many signs of disagree-

ment had found expression, and Publius, who for the first time in his life heard such vicious sentiments spoken, followed the words of the headstrong youth with consternation and surprise. He felt himself no match for this overbearing spirit, trained too in all the arts of argument and eloquence; but he could not leave all he had heard uncontroverted, and so, as Euergetes paused in order to empty his re-filled cup, he began:

“If we were all to act on your principles, in a few centuries, it seems to me, there would be no one left to subscribe to them; for the earth would be depopulated; and the manuscripts, in which you are so careful to substitute *siu* for *iu*, would be used by strong-handed mothers, if any were left, to boil the pot for their children—in this country of yours where there is no wood to burn. Just now you were boasting of your resemblance to Alcibiades, but that very gift which distinguished him, and made him dear to the Athenians—I mean his beauty—is hardly possible in connection with your doc-

trines, which would turn men into ravening beasts. He who would be beautiful must before all things be able to control himself and to be moderate—as I learnt in Rome before I ever saw Athens, and have remembered well. A Titan may perhaps have thought and talked as you do, but an Alcibiades—hardly!"

At these words the blood flew to Euergetes' face; but he suppressed the keen and insulting reply that rose to his lips, and this little victory over his wrathful impulse was made the more easy as Lysias, at this moment, rejoined the feasters; he excused himself for his long absence, and then laid before Cleopatra and her husband the gems belonging to Publius.

They were warmly admired; even Euergetes was not grudging of his praise, and each of the company admitted that he had rarely seen anything more beautiful and graceful than the bashful Hebe with down-cast eyes, and the goddess of Persuasion with her hand resting on the bride's arm.

"Yes, I will take the part of Peitho," said Cleopatra with decision.

"And I that of Herakles," cried Euergetes.

"But who is the fair one," asked King Philometor of Lysias, "whom you have in your eye, as fulfilling this incomparably lovely conception of Hebe? While you were away I recalled to memory the aspect of every woman and girl who frequents our festivals, but only to reject them all, one after the other."

"The fair girl whom I mean," replied Lysias, "has never entered this or any other Palace; indeed I am almost afraid of being too bold in suggesting to our illustrious Queen so humble a child as fit to stand beside her, though only in sport."

"I shall even have to touch her arm with my hand!" said the Queen anxiously, and she drew up her fingers as if she had to touch some unclean thing. "If you mean a flower-seller or a flute-player or something of that kind—"

"How could I dare to suggest anything so improper?" Lysias hastily interposed. "The girl of whom I speak may be sixteen years old; she is innocence itself incarnate, and she looks like a bud ready to open perhaps in the morning dew that may succeed this very night, but which as yet is still enfolded in its cup. She is of Greek race, about as tall as you are, Cleopatra; she has wonderful gazelle-like eyes, her little head is covered by a mass of abundant brown hair, when she smiles she has delicious dimples in her cheeks—and she will be sure to smile when such a Peitho speaks to her!"

"You are rousing our curiosity," cried Philometor. "In what garden, pray, does this blossom grow?"

"And how is it," added Cleopatra, "that my husband has not discovered it long since, and transplanted it to our palace."

"Probably," answered Lysias, "because he who possesses Cleopatra, the fairest rose of Egypt, regards the violets by the road-side as too insignificant to be worth glancing at. Be-

sides; the hedge that fences round my bud grows in a gloomy spot; it is difficult of access and suspiciously watched. To be brief: our Hebe is a water bearer in the temple of Serapis, and her name is Irene."

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## CHAPTER XI.

LYSIAS was one of those men from whose lips nothing ever sounds as if it were meant seriously. His statement that he regarded a serving girl from the temple of Serapis as fit to personate Hebe, was spoken as naturally and simply as if he were telling a tale for children; but his words produced an effect on his hearers like the sound of waters rushing into a leaky ship.

Publius had turned perfectly white, and it was not till his friend had uttered the name of Irene that he in some degree recovered his composure; Philometor had struck his cup on the table, and called out in much excitement:

“A water-bearer of Serapis to play Hebe in a gay festal performance! Do you conceive it possible, Cleopatra?”

"Impossible—it is absolutely out of the question," replied the Queen, decidedly. Euergetes, who also had opened his eyes wide at the Corinthian's proposition, sat for a long time gazing into his cup in silence; while his brother and sister continued to express their surprise and disapprobation and to speak of the respect and consideration which even kings must pay to the priests and servants of Serapis.

At length, once more lifting his wreath and crown, he raised his curls with both hands, and said, quite calmly and decisively:

"We must have a Hebe, and must take her where we find her. If you hesitate to allow the girl to be fetched it shall be done by my orders. The priests of Serapis are for the most part Greeks, and the high priest is a Hellene. He will not trouble himself much about a half-grown-up girl if he can thereby oblige you or me. He knows as well as the rest of us that 'one hand washes the other'! The only question now is—for I would rather avoid all woman's outcries—whether the girl will come will-

ingly or unwillingly if we send for her. What do you think, Lysias?"

"I believe she would sooner get out of prison to-day than to-morrow," replied Lysias. "Irene is a light-hearted creature, and laughs as clearly and merrily as a child at play—and besides that they starve her in her cage."

"Then I will have her fetched to-morrow!" said Euergetes.

"But," interrupted Cleopatra, "Asklepiodorus must obey us and not you; and we, my husband and I—"

"You cannot spoil sport with the priests," laughed Euergetes. "If they were Egyptians, then indeed! They are not to be taken in their nests without getting pecked; but here, as I have said, we have to deal with Greeks. What have you to fear from them? For aught I care you may leave our Hebe where she is, but I was once much pleased with these representations, and to-morrow morning, as soon as I have slept, I shall return to Alexandria, if you do not carry them into effect, and so deprive

me, Herakles, of the bride chosen for me by the gods. I have said what I have said, and I am not given to changing my mind. Besides, it is time that we should show ourselves to our friends feasting here in the next room. They are already merry, and it must be getting late."

With these words Euergetes rose from his couch, and beckoned to Hierax and a chamberlain, who arranged the folds of his transparent robe, while Philometor and Cleopatra whispered together, shrugging their shoulders and shaking their heads; and Publius, pressing his hand on the Corinthian's wrist, said in his ear: "You will not give them any help if you value our friendship; we will leave as soon as we can do so with propriety."

Euergetes did not like to be kept waiting. He was already going towards the door, when Cleopatra called him back, and said pleasantly but with gentle reproachfulness:

"You know that we are willing to follow the Egyptian custom of carrying out as far as

possible the wishes of a friend and brother for his birthday festival; but for that very reason it is not right in you to try to force us into a proceeding which we refuse with difficulty, and yet cannot carry out without exposing ourselves to the most unpleasant consequences. We beg you to make some other demand on us, and we will certainly grant it if it lies in our power."

The young colossus responded to his sister's appeal with a loud shout of laughter, waved his arm with a flourish of his hand expressive of haughty indifference; and then he exclaimed:

"The only thing I really had a fancy for out of all your possessions you are not willing to concede, and so I must abide by my word. You find me my Hebe—or I go on my way."

Again Cleopatra and her husband exchanged a few muttered words and rapid glances, Euergetes watching them the while; his legs straddled apart, his huge body bent forward, and his hands resting on his hips. His attitude expressed so much arrogance and puerile, defiant,

unruly audacity, that Cleopatra found it difficult to suppress an exclamation of disgust before she spoke.

"We are indeed brethren," she said, "and so, for the sake of the peace which has been restored and preserved with so much difficulty, we give in. The best way will be to request Asklepiodorus—"

But here Euergetes interrupted the Queen, clapping his hands loudly and laughing:

"That is right, sister! only find me my Hebe! How you do it is your affair, and is all the same to me. To-morrow evening we will have a rehearsal, and the day after we will give a representation of which our grandchildren shall repeat the fame. Nor shall a brilliant audience be lacking, for my complimentary visitors with their priestly splendour and array of arms will, it is to be hoped, arrive punctually. Come, my lords, we will go, and see what there is good to drink or to listen to at the table in the next room."

The doors were opened; music, loud talking,

the jingle of cups, and the noise of laughter sounded through them into the room where the princes had been supping, and all the King's guests followed Euergetes, with the exception of Eulæus. Cleopatra allowed them to depart without speaking a word; only to Publius she said: "Till we meet again!" but she detained the Corinthian, saying:

"You, Lysias, are the cause of this provoking business. Try now to repair the mischief by bringing the girl to us. Do not hesitate! I will guard her, protect her with the greatest care, rely upon me."

"She is a modest maiden," replied Lysias, "and will not accompany me willingly, I am sure. When I proposed her for the part of Hebe I certainly supposed that a word from you, the King and Queen, would suffice to induce the Head of the temple to entrust her to you for a few hours of harmless amusement. Pardon me if I too quit you now; I have the key of my friend's chest still in my possession, and must restore it to him."

"Shall we have her carried off secretly?" asked Cleopatra of her husband, when the Corinthian had followed the other guests.

"Only let us have no scandal, no violence," cried Philometor anxiously. "The best way would be for me to write to Asklepiodorus, and beg him in a friendly manner to entrust this girl—Ismene or Irene, or whatever the ill-starred child's name is—for a few days to you, Cleopatra, for your pleasure. I can offer him a prospect of an addition to the gift of land I made to-day, and which fell far short of his demands."

"Let me entreat your Majesty," interposed Eulæus, who was now alone with the royal couple, "let me entreat you not to make any great promises on this occasion, for the moment you do so Asklepiodorus will attribute an importance to your desire—"

"Which it is far from having, and must not seem to have," interrupted the Queen. "It is preposterous to waste so many words about a miserable creature, a water-carrying girl, and to

go through so much disturbance—but how are we to put an end to it all? What is your advice, Eulæus?"

"I thank you for that enquiry, noble princess," replied Eulæus. "My lord, the King, in my opinion, should have the girl carried off, but not with any violence, nor by a man—whom she would hardly follow so immediately as is necessary—but by a woman.

"I am thinking of the old Egyptian tale of the 'The Two Brothers,' which you are acquainted with. The Pharaoh desired to possess himself of the wife of the younger one, who lived on the Mount of Cedars, and he sent armed men to fetch her away; but only one of them came back to him, for Batau had slain all the others. Then a woman was sent with splendid ornaments, such as women love, and the fair one followed her unresistingly to the Palace.

"We may spare the ambassadors, and send only the woman; your lady in waiting, Zoë, will execute this commission admirably. Who

can blame us in any way if a girl, who loves finery, runs away from her keepers?"

"But all the world will see her as *Hebe*," sighed Philometor, "and proclaim us—the sovereign protectors of the worship of Serapis—as violators of the temple, if Asklepiodorus leads the cry. No, no, the High Priest must first be courteously applied to. In the case of his raising any difficulties, but not otherwise, shall Zoë make the attempt."

"So be it then," said the Queen, as if it were her part to express her confirmation of her husband's proposition.

"Let your lady accompany me," begged Eulæus, "and prefer your request to Asklepiodorus. While I am speaking with the High Priest, Zoë can at any rate win over the girl, and whatever we do must be done to-morrow, or the Roman will be beforehand with us. I know that he has cast an eye on Irene, who is in fact most lovely. He gives her flowers, feeds his pet bird with pheasants and peaches and other sweetmeats, lets himself be lured into the

Serapeum by his lady love as often as possible, stays there whole hours, and piously follows the processions, in order to present the violets with which you graciously honoured him by giving them to his fair one—who no doubt would rather wear royal flowers than any others—”

“Liar!” cried the Queen, interrupting the courtier in such violent excitement and such ungoverned rage, so completely beside herself, that her husband drew back startled.

“You are a slanderer! a base calumniator! The Roman attacks you with naked weapons, but you slink in the dark, like a scorpion, and try to sting your enemy in the heel. Apelles, the painter, warns us—the grandchildren of Lagus—against folks of your kidney in the picture he painted against Antiphilus; as I look at you I am reminded of his Demon of Calumny. The same spite and malice gleam in your eyes as in hers, and the same fury and greed for some victim, fire your flushed face! How you would rejoice if the youth whom Apelles has represented Calumny as clutching

by the hair, could but be Publius! and if only the lean and hollow-eyed form of Envy, and the loathsome female figures of Cunning and Treachery would come to your aid as they have to hers! But I remember too the steadfast and truthful glance of the boy she has flung to the ground, his arms thrown up to heaven, appealing for protection to the goddess and the king —and though Publius Scipio is man enough to guard himself against open attack, I will protect him against being surprised from an ambush! Leave this room! Go, I say, and you shall see how we punish slanderers!"

At these words Eulæus flung himself at the Queen's feet, but she, breathing hurriedly and with quivering nostrils, looked away over his head as if she did not even see him, till her husband came towards her, and said in a voice of most winning gentleness:

"Do not condemn him unheard, and raise him from his abasement. At least give him the opportunity of softening your indignation by bringing the water-bearer here without

angering Asklepiodorus. Carry out this affair well, Eulæus, and you will find in me an advocate with Cleopatra."

The king pointed to the door, and Eulæus retired, bowing deeply and finding his way out backwards. Philometor, now alone with his wife, said with mild reproach:

"How could you abandon yourself to such unmeasured anger? So faithful and prudent a servant—and one of the few still living of those to whom our mother was attached—cannot be sent away like a mere clumsy attendant. Besides, what is the great crime he has committed? Is it a slander which need rouse you to such fury when a cautious old man says in all innocence of a young one—a man belonging to a world which knows nothing of the mysterious sanctity of Serapis—that he has taken a fancy to a girl, who is admired by all who see her, that he seeks her out, and gives her flowers—"

"Gives her flowers?" exclaimed Cleopatra, breaking out afresh. "No, he is accused of

persecuting a maiden attached to Serapis—to Serapis I say. But it is simply false, and you would be as angry as I am if you were ever capable of feeling manly indignation, and if you did not want to make use of Eulæus for many things, some of which I know, and others—which you choose to conceal from me. Only let him fetch the girl; and when once we have her here, and if I find that the Roman's indictment against Eulæus—which I will hear to-morrow morning—is well founded, you shall see that I have manly vigour enough for both of us. Come away now; they are waiting for us in the other room."

The Queen gave a call, and chamberlains and servants hurried in; her shell-shaped litter was brought, and in a few minutes, with her husband by her side, she was borne into the great peristyle where the grandees of the court, the commanders of the troops, the most prominent of the officials of the Egyptian provinces, many artists and savants, and the ambassadors from foreign Powers, were reclining

on long rows of couches, and talking over their wine, the feast itself being ended.

The Greeks and the dark-hued Egyptians were about equally represented in this motley assembly; but among them, and particularly among the learned and the fighting men, there were also several Israelites and Syrians.

The royal pair were received by the company with acclamations and marks of respect; Cleopatra smiled as sweetly as ever, and waved her fan graciously as she descended from her litter; still she vouchsafed not the slightest attention to any one present, for she was seeking Publius, at first among those who were nearest to the couch prepared for her, and then among the other Hellenes, the Egyptians, the Jews, the ambassadors—still she found him not, and when at last she enquired for the Roman of the chief chamberlain at her side, the official was sent for who had charge of the foreign envoys. This was an officer of very high rank, whose duty it was to provide for the representatives of foreign Powers, and

he was now near at hand, for he had long been waiting for an opportunity to offer to the Queen a message of leave-taking from Publius Cornelius Scipio, and to tell her from him, that he had retired to his tent because a letter had come to him from Rome.

“Is that true?” asked the Queen letting her feather fan droop, and looking her interlocutor severely in the face.

“The trireme *Proteus*, coming from Brundisium, entered the harbour of Eunostus only yesterday,” he replied; “and an hour ago a mounted messenger brought the letter. Nor was it an ordinary letter but a despatch from the Senate—I know the form and seal.”

“And Lysias, the Corinthian?”

“He accompanied the Roman.”

“Has the Senate written to him too?” asked the Queen annoyed, and ironically. She turned her back on the officer without any kind of courtesy, and turning again to the chamberlain she went on, in incisive tones, as if she were presiding at a trial:

"King Euergetes sits there among the Egyptians near the envoys from the temples of the Upper Country. He looks as if he were giving them a discourse, and they hang on his lips. What is he saying, and what does all this mean?"

"Before you came in, he was sitting with the Syrians and Jews, and telling them what the merchants and scribes, whom he sent to the South, have reported of the lands lying near the lakes through which the Nile is said to flow. He thinks that new sources of wealth have revealed themselves not far from the head of the sacred river which can hardly flow in from the ocean, as the ancients supposed."

"And now?" asked Cleopatra. "What information is he giving to the Egyptians?"

The chamberlain hastened towards Euergetes' couch, and soon returned to the Queen—who meanwhile had exchanged a few friendly words with Onias, the Hebrew commander—and informed her in a low tone that the king was interpreting a passage from the *Timæus* of Plato, in which Solon celebrates the lofty wis-

dom of the priests of Sais; he was speaking with much spirit, and the Egyptians received it with loud applause.

Cleopatra's countenance darkened more and more, but she concealed it behind her fan, signed to Philometor to approach, and whispered to him:

"Keep near Euergetes; he has a great deal too much to say to the Egyptians. He is extremely anxious to stand well with them, and those whom he really desires to please are completely entrapped by his portentous amiability. He has spoiled my evening, and I shall leave you to yourselves."

"Till to-morrow, then."

"I shall hear the Roman's complaint up on my roof terrace; there is always a fresh air up there. If you wish to be present I will send for you, but first I would speak to him alone, for he has received letters from the senate which may contain something of importance. So, till to-morrow."

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## CHAPTER XII.

WHILE, in the vast peristyle, many a cup was still being emptied, and the carousers were growing merrier and noisier—while Cleopatra was abusing the maids and ladies who were undressing her for their clumsiness and un-readiness, because every touch hurt her, and every pin taken out of her dress pricked her—the Roman and his friend Lysias walked up and down in their tent in violent agitation.

“Speak lower,” said the Greek, “for the very griffins woven into the tissue of these thin walls seem to me to be lying in wait, and listening.

“I certainly was not mistaken. When I came to fetch the gems I saw a light gleaming in the doorway as I approached it; but the intruder must have been warned, for just as I got up to the lantern in front of the servants’

tent, it disappeared, and the torch which usually burns outside our tent had not been lighted at all; but a beam of light fell on the road, and a man's figure slipped across in a black robe sprinkled with gold ornaments which I saw glitter as the pale light of the lantern fell upon them—just as a slimy, black newt glides through a pool. I have good eyes as you know, and I will give one of them at this moment, if I am mistaken, and if the cat that stole into our tent was not Eulæus."

"And why did you not have him caught?" asked Publius, provoked.

"Because our tent was pitch-dark," replied Lysias, and that stout villain is as slippery as a badger with the dogs at his heels. Owls, bats and such vermin which seek their prey by night are all hideous to me, and this Eulæus, who grins like a hyæna when he laughs—"

"This Eulæus," said Publius, interrupting his friend, "shall learn to know me, and know too by experience that a man comes to no

good, who picks a quarrel with my father's son."

"But, in the first instance, you treated him with disdain and courtesy," said Lysias, "and that was not wise."

"Wise, and wise, and wise!" the Roman broke out. "He is a scoundrel. It makes no difference to me so long as he keeps out of my way; but when, as has been the case for several days now, he constantly sticks close to me to spy upon me, and treats me as if he were my equal, I will show him that he is mistaken. He has no reason to complain of my want of frankness; he knows my opinion of him, and that I am quite inclined to give him a thrashing. If I wanted to meet his cunning with cunning I should get the worst of it, for he is far superior to me in intrigue. I shall fare better with him by my own unconcealed mode of fighting, which is new to him and puzzles him; besides it is better suited to my own nature, and more consonant to me than any other. He is not only sly, but is keen-witted, and he has at

once connected the complaint which I have threatened to bring against him with the manuscript which Serapion, the recluse, gave me in his presence. There it lies—only look.

“Now, being not merely crafty, but a daring rascal too—two qualities which generally contradict each other, for no one who is really prudent lives in disobedience to the laws—he has secretly untied the strings which fastened it. But, you see, he had not time enough to tie the roll up again! He has read it all or in part, and I wish him joy of the picture of himself he will have found painted there. The anchorite wields a powerful pen, and paints with a firm outline and strongly marked colouring. If he has read the roll to the end it will spare me the trouble of explaining to him what I purpose to charge him with; if you disturbed him too soon I shall have to be more explicit in my accusation. Be that as it may, it is all the same to me.”

“Nay, certainly not,” cried Lysias, “for in the first case Eulæus will have time to meditate his

lies, and bribe witnesses for his defence. If any one entrusted me with such important papers—and if it had not been you who neglected to do it—I would carefully seal or lock them up. Where have you put the despatch from the Senate which the messenger brought you just now?"

"That is locked up in this casket," replied Publius, moving his hand to press it more closely over his robe, under which he had carefully hidden it.

"May I not know what it contains?" asked the Corinthian.

"No, there is not time for that now, for we must first, and at once, consider what can be done to repair the last mischief which you have done. Is it not a disgraceful thing that you should betray the sweet creature whose childlike embarrassment charmed us this morning—of whom you yourself said, as we came home, that she reminded you of your lovely sister—that you should betray her, I say, into the power of the wildest of all the profligates I:

ever met—to this monster, whose pleasures are the unspeakable, whose boast is vice? What has Euergetes—”

“By great Poseidon!” cried Lysias, eagerly interrupting his friend. “I never once thought of this second Alcibiades when I mentioned her. What can the manager of a performance do, but all in his power to secure the applause of the audience? and, by my honour! it was for my own sake that I wanted to bring Irene into the palace—I am mad with love for her—she has undone me.”

“Aye! like Callista, and Phryne, and the flute-player Stephanion,” interrupted the Roman shrugging his shoulders.

“How should it be different?” asked the Corinthian looking at his friend in astonishment. “Eros has many arrows in his quiver; one strikes deeply, another less deeply; and I believe that the wound I have received to-day will ache for many a week if I have to give up this child, who is even more charming than the much-admired Hebe on our cistern.”

"I advise you however to accustom yourself to the idea, and the sooner the better," said Publius gravely, as he set himself with his arms crossed, directly in front of the Greek. "What would you feel inclined to do to me if I took a fancy to lure your pretty sister—whom Irene, I repeat it, is said to resemble—to tempt her with base cunning from your parents' house?"

"I protest against any such comparison," cried the Corinthian very positively, and more genuinely exasperated than the Roman had ever seen him.

"You are angry without cause," replied Publius calmly and gravely. "Your sister is a charming girl, the ornament of your illustrious house, and yet I dare compare the humble Irene—"

"With her! do you mean to say?" Lysias shouted again. "That is a poor return for the hospitality which was shown to you by my parents and of which you formerly sang the praises. I am a good-natured fellow and will submit to more from you than from any other man—I know not

why, myself;—but in a matter like this I do not understand a joke! My sister is the only daughter of the noblest and richest house in Corinth and has many suitors. She is in no respect inferior to the child of your own parents, and I should like to know what you would say if I made so bold as to compare the proud Lucretia with this poor little thing, who carries water like a serving-maid.—”

“Do so, by all means! interrupted Publius coolly, “I do not take your rage amiss, for you do not know who these two sisters are, in the temple of Serapis. Besides, they do not fill their jars for men but in the service of a god. Here—take this roll and read it through while I answer the despatch from Rome. Here! Spartacus, come and light a few more lamps.”

In a few minutes the two young men were sitting opposite each other at the table which stood in the middle of their tent. Publius wrote busily, and only looked up when his friend, who was reading the anchorite’s document, struck his hand on the table in disgust or sprang from

his seat ejaculating bitter words of indignation. Both had finished at the same moment, and when Publius had folded and sealed his letter, and Lysias had flung the roll on to the table, the Roman said slowly, as he looked his friend steadily in the face,

“Well?”

“Well!” repeated Lysias. “I now find myself in the humiliating position of being obliged to deem myself more stupid than you—I must own you in the right, and beg your pardon for having thought you insolent and arrogant! Never, no never did I hear a story so infernally scandalous as that in that roll, and such a thing could never have occurred but among these accursed Egyptians! Poor little Irene! And how can the dear little girl have kept such a sunny look through it all! I could thrash myself like any school-boy to think that I—a fool among fools—should have directed the attention of Euergetes to this girl, and he, the most powerful and profligate man in the whole country. What can now be done to save Irene from him?

I cannot endure the thought of seeing her abandoned to his clutches, and I will not permit it to happen.

"Do not you think that we ought to take the water-bearers under our charge?"

"Not only we ought but we must," said Publius decisively; "and if we did not we should be contemptible wretches. Since the recluse took me into his confidence I feel as if it were my duty to watch over these girls whose parents have been stolen from them, as if I were their guardian—and you, my Lysias, shall help me. The elder sister is not now very friendly towards me, but I do not esteem her the less for that; the younger one seems less grave and reserved than Klea; I saw how she responded to your smile when the procession broke up. Afterwards, you did not come home immediately any more than I did, and I suspect that it was Irene who detained you. Be frank, I earnestly beseech you, and tell me all; for we must act in unison, and with thorough deliberation, if we hope to succeed in spoiling Euergetes' game."

"I have not much to tell you," replied the Corinthian. "After the procession I went to the Pastophorium—naturally it was to see Irene, and in order not to fail in this I allowed the pilgrims to tell me what visions the god had sent them in their dreams, and what advice had been given them in the temple of Asklepius as to what to do for their own complaints, and those of their cousins, male and female.

"Quite half an hour had passed so before Irene came. She carried a little basket in which lay the gold ornaments she had worn at the festival, and which she had to restore to the keeper of the temple-treasure. My pomegranate flower, which she had accepted in the morning, shone upon me from afar, and then, when she caught sight of me and blushed all over, casting down her eyes, then it was that it first struck me 'Just like the Hebe on our cistern.'

"She wanted to pass me, but I detained her, begging her to show me the ornaments in her hand; I said a number of things such as girls like to hear, and then I asked her if she were

strictly watched, and whether they gave her delicate little hands and feet—which were worthy of better occupation than water-carrying—a great deal to do. She did not hesitate to answer, but with all she said she rarely raised her eyes. The longer you look at her the lovelier she is—and yet she is still a mere child—though a child certainly who no longer loves staying at home, who has dreams of splendour, and enjoyment, and freedom while she is kept shut up in a dismal, dark place, and left to starve.

“The poor creatures may never quit the temple excepting for a procession, or before sunrise. It sounded too delightful when she said that she was always so horribly tired, and so glad to go to sleep again after she was waked, and had to go out at once just when it is coldest, in the twilight before sunrise. Then she has to draw water from a cistern called the Well of the Sun.”

“Do you know where that cistern lies?” asked Publius.

“Behind the acacia-grove,” answered Lysias. “The guide pointed it out to me. It is said to hold particularly sacred water, which must be poured as a libation to the god at sunrise, unmixed with any other. The girls must get up so early, that as soon as dawn breaks water from this cistern shall not be lacking at the altar of Serapis. It is poured out on the earth by the priests as a drink-offering.”

Publius had listened attentively, and had not lost a word of his friend’s narrative. He now quitted him hastily, opened the tent-door, and went out into the night, looking up to discover the hour from the stars which were silently pursuing their everlasting courses in countless thousands, and sparkling with extraordinary brilliancy in the deep blue sky. The moon was already set, and the morning-star was slowly rising—every night since the Roman had been in the land of the Pyramids he had admired its magnificent size and brightness.

A cold breeze fanned the young man’s brow, and as he drew his robe across his breast with

a shiver, he thought of the sisters, who, before long, would have to go out in the fresh morning-air. Once more he raised his eyes from the earth to the firmament over his head, and it seemed to him that he saw before his very eyes the proud form of Klea, enveloped in a mantle sown over with stars. His heart throbbed high, and he felt as if the breeze that his heaving breast inhaled in deep breaths was as fresh and pure as the ether that floats over Elysium, and of a strange potency withal, as if too rare to breathe. Still he fancied he saw before him the image of Klea, but as he stretched out his hand towards the beautiful vision it vanished—a sound of hoofs and wheels fell upon his ear. Publius was not accustomed to abandon himself to dreaming when action was needed, and this reminded him of the purpose for which he had come out into the open air. Chariot after chariot came driving past as he returned into his tent. Lysias, who during his absence had been pacing up and down and reflecting, met him with the question :

"How long is it yet till sunrise?"

"Hardly two hours," replied the Roman.  
"And we must make good use of them if we would not arrive too late."

"So I think too," cried the Corinthian.  
"The sisters will soon be at the Well of the Sun outside the temple walls, and I will persuade Irene to follow me. You think I shall not be successful? Nor do I myself—but still perhaps she will if I promise to show her something very pretty, and if she does not suspect that she is to be parted from her sister, for she is like a child."

"But Klea," interrupted Publius thoughtfully, "is grave and prudent; and the light tone which you are so ready to adopt will be very little to her taste. Consider that, and dare the attempt—no, you dare not deceive her. Tell her the whole truth, out of Irene's hearing, with the gravity the matter deserves, and she will not hinder her sister when she knows how great and how imminent is the danger that threatens her."

"Good!" said the Corinthian. "I will be so solemnly earnest that the most wrinkled and furrowed grey-beard among the censors of your native city shall seem a Dionysiac dancer compared with me. I will speak like your Cato when he so bitterly complained that the epicures of Rome paid more now for a barrel of fresh herrings than for a yoke of oxen. You shall be perfectly satisfied with me!— But whither am I to conduct Irene? I might perhaps make use of one of the king's chariots which are passing now by dozens to carry the guests home."

"I also had thought of that," replied Publius. "Go with the chief of the Diadoches, whose splendid house was shown to us yesterday. It is on the way to the Serapeum, and just now at the feast you were talking with him incessantly. When there, indemnify the driver by the gift of a gold piece, so that he may not betray us, and do not return here but proceed to the harbour. I will await you near the little temple of Isis with our travelling

chariot and my own horses, will receive Irene, and conduct her to some new refuge while you drive back Euergetes' chariot, and restore it to the driver."

"That will not satisfy me by any means," said Lysias very gravely; "I was ready to give up my pomegranate flower to you yesterday for Irene, but herself—"

"I want nothing of her," exclaimed Publius annoyed. "But you might—it seems to me—be rather more zealous in helping me to preserve her from the misfortune which threatens her through your own blunder. We cannot bring her here, but I think that I have thought of a safe hiding-place for her.

"Do you remember Apollodorus, the sculptor, to whom we were recommended by my father, and his kind and friendly wife who set before us that capital Chios wine? The man owes me a service, for my father commissioned him and his assistants to execute the mosaic pavement in the new arcade he was having built in

the capitol; and subsequently, when the envy of rival artists threatened his life, my father saved him. You yourself heard him say that he and his were all at my disposal."

"Certainly, certainly," said Lysias. "But say, does it not strike you as most extraordinary that artists, the very men, that is to say, who beyond all others devote themselves to ideal aims and efforts, are particularly ready to yield to the basest impulses; envy, detraction, and—"

"Man!" exclaimed Publius, angrily interrupting the Greek, "can you never for ten seconds keep to the same subject, and never keep anything to yourself that comes into your head? We have just now, as it seems to me, more important matters to discuss than the jealousy of each other shown by artists—and in my opinion, by learned men too. The sculptor Apollodorus, who is thus beholden to me, has been living here for the last six months with his wife and daughters, for he has been executing for Philometor the busts of the philosophers,

and the animal groups to decorate the open space in front of the tombs of Apis. His sons are managers of his large factory in Alexandria, and when he next goes there, down the Nile in his boat, as often happens, he can take Irene with him, and put her on board a ship. As to where we can have her taken to keep her safe from Euergetes, we will talk that over afterwards with Apollodorus."

"Good, very good," agreed the Corinthian. "By Herakles! I am not suspicious—still it does not altogether please me that you should yourself conduct Irene to Apollodorus, for if you are seen in her company our whole project may be shipwrecked. Send the sculptor's wife, who is little known in Memphis, to the Temple of Isis, and request her to bring a veil and cloak to conceal the girl. Greet the gay Milesian from me too, and tell her—no, tell her nothing—I shall see her myself afterwards at the Temple of Isis."

During the last words of this conversation, slaves had been enveloping the two young men

in their mantles. They now quitted the tent together, wished each other success, and set out at a brisk pace; the Roman to have his horses harnessed, and Lysias to accompany the chief of the Diadoches in one of the king's chariots, and then to act on the plan he had agreed upon with Publius.

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## CHAPTER XIII.

CHARIOT after chariot hurried out of the great gate of the King's Palace and into the city, now sunk in slumber. All was still in the great banqueting hall, and dark-hued slaves began with brooms and sponges to clean the mosaic pavement, which was strewed with rose leaves and with those that had fallen from the faded garlands of ivy and poplar; while here and there the spilt wine shone with a dark gleam in the dim light of the few lamps that had not been extinguished.

A young flute-player, overcome with sleep and wine, still sat in one corner. The poplar wreath that had crowned his curls had slipped over his pretty face, but even in sleep he still held his flute clasped fast in his fingers. The servants let him sleep on, and hustled about

without noticing him; only an overseer pointed to him, and said laughing:

“His companions went home no more sober than that one. He is a pretty boy, and pretty Chloë’s lover besides—she will look for him in vain this morning.”

“And to-morrow too perhaps;” answered another; “for if the fat king sees her, poor Damon will have seen the last of her.”

But The Fat King, as Euergetes was called by the Alexandrians, and, following their example, by all the rest of Egypt, was not just then thinking of Chloë, nor of any such person; he was in the bath attached to his splendidly fitted residence. Divested of all clothing, he was standing in the tepid fluid which completely filled a huge basin of white marble. The clear surface of the perfumed water mirrored statues of nymphs fleeing from the pursuit of satyrs, and reflected the shimmering light of numbers of lamps suspended from the ceiling. At the upper end of the bath reclined the bearded and stalwart statue of the Nile, over

whom the sixteen infant figures—representing the number of ells to which the great Egyptian stream must rise to secure a favourable inundation—clambered and played to the delight of their noble father Nile and of themselves. From the vase which supported the arm of the venerable god flowed an abundant stream of cold water, which five pretty lads received in slender alabaster vases, and poured over the head and the enormously prominent muscles of the breast, the back and the arms of the young king who was taking his bath.

"More, more—again and again," cried Euergetes, as the boys began to pause in bringing and pouring the water; and then, when they threw a fresh stream over him, he snorted and plunged with satisfaction, and a perfect shower of jets splashed off him as the blast of his breath sputtered away the water that fell over his face.

At last he shouted out: "Enough!" flung himself with all his force into the water, that spurted up as if a huge block of stone had

been thrown into it, held his head for a long time under water, and then went up the marble steps of the bath shaking his head violently and mischievously in his boyish insolence, so as thoroughly to wet his friends and servants who were standing round the margin of the basin; he suffered himself to be wrapped in snowy-white sheets of the thinnest and finest linen, to be sprinkled with costly essences of delicate odour, and then he withdrew into a small room hung all round with gaudy hangings.

There he flung himself on a mound of soft cushions, and said with a deep-drawn breath: "Now I am happy; and I am as sober again as a baby that has never tasted anything but its mother's milk. Pindar is right! there is nothing better than water! and it slakes that raging fire which wine lights up in our brain and blood. Did I talk much nonsense just now, Hierax?"

The man thus addressed, the commander-in-chief of the royal troops, and the king's par-

ticular friend, cast a hesitating glance at the bystanders; but, Euergetes desiring him to speak without reserve, he replied:

“Wine never weakens the mind of such as you are to the point of folly, but you were imprudent. It would be little short of a miracle if Philometor did not remark—”

“Capital!” interrupted the king sitting up on his cushions. “You, Hierax, and you, Komarus, remain here—you others may go. But do not go too far off, so as to be close at hand in case I should need you. In these days as much happens in a few hours as usually takes place in as many years.”

Those who were thus dismissed withdrew, only the king's dresser, a Macedonian of rank, paused doubtfully at the door, but Euergetes signed to him to retire immediately, calling after him:

“I am very merry and shall not go to bed. At three hours after sunrise I expect Aristarchus—and for work too. Put out the manuscripts that I brought. Is the Eunuch Eulæus

waiting in the anteroom? Yes—so much the better!“

“Now we are alone, my wise friends Hierax and Komanus, and I must explain to you that on this occasion, out of pure prudence, you seem to me to have been anything rather than prudent. To be prudent is to have the command of a wide circle of thought, so that what is close at hand is no more an obstacle than what is remote. The narrow mind can command only that which lies close under observation; the fool and visionary only that which is far off. I will not blame you, for even the ~~wisest~~ has his hours of folly, but on this occasion you have certainly overlooked that which is at hand, in gazing at the distance, and I see you stumble in consequence. If you had not fallen into that error you would hardly have looked so bewildered when, just now, I exclaimed ‘Capital!’

“Now, attend to me. Philometor and my sister know very well what my humour is, and what to expect of me. If I had put on the mask of a satisfied man they would have been sur-

prised, and have scented mischief, but as it was I showed myself to them exactly what I always am and even more reckless than usual, and talked of what I wanted so openly that they may indeed look forward to some deed of violence at my hands but hardly to a treacherous surprise, and that to-morrow; for he who falls on his enemy in the rear makes no noise about it.

“If I believed in your casuistry, I might think that to attack the enemy from behind was not a particularly fine thing to do, for even I would rather see a man’s face than his rear—particularly in the case of my brother and sister, who are both handsome to look upon. But what can a man do? After all, the best thing to do is what wins the victory and makes the game. Indeed, my mode of warfare has found supporters among the wise. If you want to catch mice you must waste bacon, and if we are to tempt men into a snare we must know what their notions and ideas are, and begin by endeavouring to confuse them.

“A bull is least dangerous when he runs

straight ahead in his fury; while his two-legged opponent is least dangerous when he does not know what he is about and runs feeling his way first to the right and then to the left. Thanks for your approval—for I have deserved it, and I hope to be able to return it, my friend Hierax. I am curious as to your report. Shake up the cushion here under my head—and now you may begin."

"All appears admirably arranged," answered the General. "The flower of our troops, the Diadoches and Hetairoi, two thousand-five hundred men, are on their way hither, and by to-morrow will encamp north of Memphis. Five hundred will find their way into the citadel, with the priests and other visitors to congratulate you on your birthday, the other two thousand will remain concealed in the tents. The captain of your brother Philometor's Philobasilistes is bought over, and will stand by us; but his price was high—Komanus was forced to offer him twenty talents before he would bite."

"He shall have them," said the king laugh-

ing, "and he shall keep them too, till it suits me to regard him as suspicious, and to reward him according to his deserts by confiscating his estates. Well! proceed."

"In order to quench the rising in Thebes, the day before yesterday Philometor sent the best of the mercenaries with the standards of Desilaus and Arsinoe to the South. Certainly it cost not a little to bribe the ringleaders, and to stir up the discontent to an outbreak."

"My brother will repay us for this outlay," interrupted the king, "when we pour his treasure into our own coffers. Go on."

"We shall have most difficulty with the priests and the Jews. The former cling to Philometor, because he is the eldest son of his father, and has given large bounties to the temples, particularly of Apollinopolis and Philæ; the Jews are attached to him, because he favours them more than the Greeks, and he, and his wife—your illustrious sister—trouble themselves with their vain religious squabbles; he disputes with them about the doctrines contained in their

book, and at table too prefers conversing with them to any one else."

"I will salt the wine and meat for them that they fatten on here," cried Euergetes vehemently, "I forbade to-day their presence at my table, for they have good eyes and wits as sharp as their noses. And they are most dangerous when they are in fear, or can reckon on any gains.

"At the same time it cannot be denied that they are honest and tenacious, and as most of them are possessed of some property they rarely make common cause with the shrieking mob—particularly here in Alexandria.

"Envy alone can reproach them for their industry and enterprise, for the activity of the Hellenes has improved upon the example set by them and their Phœnician kindred.

"They thrive best in peaceful times, and since the world runs more quietly here, under my brother and sister, than under me, they attach themselves to them, lend my brother money, and supply my sister with cut stones,

sapphires and emeralds, selling fine stuffs and other woman's gear for a scrap of written papyrus, which will soon be of no more value than the feather which falls from the wing of that green screaming bird on the perch yonder.

"It is incomprehensible to me that so keen a people cannot perceive that there is nothing permanent but change, nothing so certain as that nothing is certain; and that they therefore should regard their god as the one only god, their own doctrine as absolutely and eternally true, and that they condemn what other peoples believe.

"These darkened views make fools of them, but certainly good soldiers too—perhaps by reason indeed of this very exalted self-consciousness and their firm reliance on their supreme god."

"Yes, they certainly are," assented Hierax. "But they serve your brother more willingly, and at a lower price, than us."

"I will show them," cried the king, "that

their taste is a perverted and obnoxious one. I require of the priests that they should instruct the people to be obedient, and to bear their privations patiently; but the Jews," and at these words his eyes rolled with an ominous glare, "the Jews I will exterminate, when the time comes."

"That will be good for our treasury too," laughed Komanus.

"And for the temples in the country," added Euergetes, "for though I seek to extirpate other foes I would rather win over the priests; and I must try to win them if Philometor's kingdom falls into my hands, for the Egyptians require that their king should be a god; and I cannot arrive at the dignity of a real god, to whom my swarthy subjects will pray with thorough satisfaction, and without making my life a burthen to me by continual revolts, unless I am raised to it by the suffrages of the priests."

"And nevertheless," replied Hierax, who was the only one of Euergetes' dependants,

who dared to contradict him on important questions, "nevertheless this very day a grave demand is to be preferred on your account to the High Priest of Serapis. You press for the surrender of a servant of the god, and Philometor will not neglect—"

"Will not neglect," interrupted Euergetes, "to inform the mighty Asklepiodorus that he wants the sweet creature for me, and not for himself. Do you know that Eros has pierced my heart, and that I burn for the fair Irene, although these eyes have not yet been blessed with the sight of her?"

"I see you believe me, and I am speaking the exact truth, for I vow I will possess myself of this infantine Hebe as surely as I hope to win my brother's throne; but when I plant a tree, it is not merely to ornament my garden but to get some use of it. You will see how I will win over both the prettiest of little lady-loves and the High Priest who, to be sure, is a Greek, but still a man hard to bend. My tools are all ready outside there."

"Now, leave me, and order Eulæus to join me here."

"You are as a divinity," said Komanus, bowing deeply, "and we but as frail mortals. Your proceedings often seem dark and incomprehensible to our weak intellect, but when a course, which to us seems to lead to no good issue, turns out well, we are forced to admit with astonishment that you always choose the best way, though often a tortuous one."

For a short time the king was alone, sitting with his black brows knit, and gazing meditatively at the floor. But as soon as he heard the soft foot-fall of Eulæus, and the louder step of his guide, he once more assumed the aspect of a careless and reckless man of the world, shouted a jolly welcome to Eulæus, reminded him of his, the king's, boyhood, and of how often he, Eulæus, had helped him to persuade his mother to grant him some wish she had previously refused him.

"But now, old boy," continued the king, "the times are changed, and with you now-a-

days it is everything for Philometor and nothing for poor Euergetes, who, being the younger, is just the one who most needs your assistance."

Eulæus bowed with a smile which conveyed that he understood perfectly how little the king's last words were spoken in earnest, and he said:

"I purposed always to assist the weaker of you two, and that is what I believe myself to be doing now."

"You mean my sister?"

"Our sovereign lady Cleopatra is of the sex which is often unjustly called the weaker. Though you no doubt were pleased to speak in jest when you asked that question, I feel bound to answer you distinctly that it was not Cleopatra that I meant, but King Philometor."

"Philometor? Then you have no faith in his strength, you regard me as stronger than he; and yet, at the banquet to-day, you offered me your services, and told me that the task had devolved upon you of demanding the sur-

render of the little serving-maiden of Serapis, in the king's name, of Asklepiodorus, the High Priest. Do you call that aiding the weaker? But perhaps you were drunk when you told me that?

“No? You were more moderate than I? Then some other change of views must have taken place in you; and yet that would very much surprise me, since your principles require you to aid the weaker son of my mother—”

“You are laughing at me,” interrupted the courtier with gentle reproachfulness, and yet in a tone of entreaty. “If I took your side it was not from caprice, but simply and expressly from a desire to remain faithful to the one aim and end of my life.”

“And that is?”

“To provide for the welfare of this country in the same sense as did your illustrious mother, whose counsellor I was.”

“But you forget to mention the other—to place yourself to the best possible advantage.”

“I did not forget it, but I did not mention

it, for I know how closely measured out are the moments of a king; and besides, it seems to me as self-evident that we think of our personal advantage as that when we buy a horse we also buy his shadow."

"How subtle! But I no more blame you than I should a girl who stands before her mirror to deck herself for her lover, and who takes the same opportunity of rejoicing in her own beauty.

"However, to return to your first speech. It is for the sake of Egypt as you think—if I understand you rightly—that you now offer me the services you have hitherto devoted to my brother's interests?"

"As you say; in these difficult times the country needs the will and the hand of a powerful leader."

"And such a leader you think I am?"

"Aye, a giant in strength of will, body and intellect—whose desire to unite the two parts of Egypt in your sole possession cannot fail, if you strike and grasp boldly, and if—"

“If?” repeated the king, looking at the speaker so keenly that his eyes fell, and he answered softly:

“If Rome should raise no objection.”

Euergetes shrugged his shoulders, and replied gravely:

“Rome indeed is like Fate, which always must give the final decision in everything we do. I have certainly not been behind-hand in enormous sacrifices to mollify that inexorable power, and my representative, through whose hands pass far greater sums than through those of the paymasters of the troops, writes me word that they are not unfavourably disposed towards me in the Senate.”

“We have learned that from ours also. You have more friends by the Tiber than Philometor, my own king, has; but our last despatch is already several weeks old, and in the last few days things have occurred—”

“Speak!” cried Euergetes, sitting bolt upright on his cushions. “But if you are laying a trap for me, and if you are speaking now as

my brother's tool, I will punish you—aye! and if you fled to the uttermost cave of the Troglodytes I would have you followed up, and you should be torn in pieces alive, as surely as I believe myself to be the true son of my father."

"And I should deserve the punishment," replied Eulæus humbly. Then he went on: "If I see clearly, great events lie before us in the next few days."

"Yes—truly," said Euergetes firmly.

"But just at present Philometor is better represented in Rome than he has ever been. You made acquaintance with young Publius Scipio at the king's table, and showed little zeal in endeavouring to win his good graces."

"He is one of the Cornelii," interrupted the king, "a distinguished young man, and related to all the noblest blood of Rome; but he is not an ambassador; he has travelled from Athens to Alexandria, in order to learn more than he need; and he carries his head higher and speaks more freely than becomes him be-

fore kings, because the young fellows fancy it looks well to behave like their elders."

"He is of more importance than you imagine."

"Then I will invite him to Alexandria, and there will win him over in three days, as surely as my name is Euergetes."

"It will then be too late, for he has to-day received, as I know for certain, plenipotentiary powers from the Senate to act in their name in case of need, until the envoy who is to be sent here again arrives."

"And I only now learn this for the first time!" cried the king springing up from his couch, "my friends must be deaf, and blind and dull indeed, if still I have any, and my servants and emissaries too! I cannot bear this haughty ungracious fellow; but I will invite him to-morrow morning—nay I will invite him to-day, to a festive entertainment, and send him the four handsomest horses that I have brought with me from Cyrene. I will—"

"It will all be in vain," said Eulæus calmly

and dispassionately. "For he is master, in the fullest and widest meaning of the word, of the Queen's favour—nay—if I may permit myself to speak out freely—of Cleopatra's more than warm liking, and he enjoys this sweetest of gifts with a thankful heart. Philometor—as he always does—lets matters go as they may, and Cleopatra and Publius—Publius and Cleopatra triumph even publicly in their love; gaze into each other's eyes like any pair of pastoral Arcadians, exchange cups and kiss the rim on the spot where the lips of the other have touched it. Promise and grant what you will to this man, he will stand by your sister; and if you should succeed in expelling her from the throne he would boldly treat you as Popilius Lænas did your uncle Antiochus: he would draw a circle round your person, and say that if you dared to step beyond it Rome would march against you."

Euergetes listened in silence, then, flinging away the draperies that wrapped his body, he paced up and down in stormy agitation, groan-

ing from time to time, and roaring like a wild bull that feels itself confined with cords and bands, and that exerts all its strength in vain to rend them.

Finally he stood still in front of Eulæus and asked him:

“What more do you know of the Roman?”

“He, who would not allow you to compare yourself to Alcibiades, is endeavouring to outdo that darling of the Athenian maidens; for he is not content with having stolen the heart of the king's wife, he is putting out his hand to reach the fairest virgin who serves the highest of the gods. The water-bearer whom Lysias, the Roman's friend, recommended for a Hebe is beloved by Publius, and he hopes to enjoy her favours more easily in your gay palace than he can in the gloomy temple of Serapis.”

At these words the king struck his forehead with his hand, exclaiming: “Oh! to be a king —a man who is a match for any ten! and to be obliged to submit with a patient shrug like

a peasant whose grain my horsemen crush into the ground!

“He can spoil everything; mar all my plans and thwart all my desires—and I can do nothing but clench my fist, and suffocate with rage. But this fuming and groaning are just as unavailing as my raging and cursing by the death-bed of my mother, who was dead all the same, and never got up again.

“If this Publius were a Greek, a Syrian, an Egyptian—nay, were he my own brother—I tell you, Eulæus, he should not long stand in my way; but he is plenipotentiary from Rome, and Rome is Fate—Rome is Fate.”

The king flung himself back on to his cushions with a deep sigh, and as if crushed with despair, hiding his face in the soft pillows; but Eulæus crept noiselessly up to the young giant, and whispered in his ear with solemn deliberateness:

“Rome is Fate, but even Rome can do nothing against Fate. Publius Scipio must die because he is ruining your mother’s daughter,

and stands in the way of your saving Egypt. The Senate would take a terrible revenge if he were murdered, but what can they do if wild beasts fall on their plenipotentiary, and tear him to pieces?"

"Grand! splendid!" cried Euergetes, springing again to his feet, and opening his large eyes with radiant surprise and delight, as if Heaven itself had opened before them, revealing the sublime host of the gods feasting at golden tables.

"You are a great man, Eulæus, and I shall know how to reward you; but do you know of such wild beasts as we require, and do they know how to conduct themselves so that no one shall dare to harbour even the shadow of a suspicion that the wounds torn by their teeth and claws were inflicted by daggers, pikes or spear-heads?"

"Be perfectly easy," replied Eulæus. "These beasts of prey have already had work to do here in Memphis, and are in the service of the king—"

"Aha! of my gentle brother!" laughed Euergetes. "And he boasts of never having killed any one excepting in battle—and now—"

"But Philometor has a wife," interposed Eu-læus; and Euergetes went on.

"Aye, woman, woman! what is there that a man may not learn from a woman?"

Then he added in a lower tone: "When can your wild beasts do their work?"

"The sun has long since risen; before it sets I will have made my preparations, and by about midnight, I should think, the deed may be done. We will promise the Roman a secret meeting, lure him out to the Temple of Serapis, and on his way home through the desert—"

"Aye, then,—" cried the king, making a thrust at his own breast as though his hand held a dagger, and he added in warning: "But your beasts must be as powerful as lions, and as cautious—as cautious, as cats. If you want gold apply to Komanus, or, better still, take this purse. Is it enough? Still I must ask you;

have you any personal ground of hatred against the Roman?"

"Yes," answered Eulæus decisively. "He guesses that I know all about him and his doings, and he has attacked me with false accusations which may bring me into peril this very day. If you should hear that the Queen has decided on throwing me into prison, take immediate steps for my liberation."

"No one shall touch a hair of your head; depend upon that. I see that it is to your interest to play my game, and I am heartily glad of it, for a man works with all his might for no one but himself. And now for the last thing: When will you fetch my little Hebe?"

"In an hour's time I am going to Asklepiodorus; but we must not demand the girl till to-morrow, for to-day she must remain in the temple as a decoy-bird for Publius Scipio."

"I will take patience; still I have yet another charge to give you. Represent the matter to the High Priest in such a way that he shall

think my brother wishes to gratify one of my fancies by demanding—absolutely demanding—the water-bearer on my behalf. Provoke the man as far as is possible without exciting suspicion, and if I know him rightly, he will stand upon his rights, and refuse persistently. Then, after you, will come Komanus from me with greetings and gifts and promises.

“To-morrow, when we have done what must be done to the Roman, you shall fetch the girl in my brother’s name either by cunning or by force; and the day after, if the gods graciously lend me their aid in uniting the two realms of Egypt under my own hand, I will explain to Asklepiodorus that I have punished Philometor for his sacrilege against his temple, and have deposed him from the throne. Serapis shall see which of us is his friend.

“If all goes well, as I mean that it shall, I will appoint you Epitropon of the re-united kingdom—that I swear to you by the souls of my deceased ancestors. I will speak with you to-day at any hour you may demand it.”

Eulæus departed with a step as light as if his interview with the king had restored him to youth.

When Hierax, Komanus, and the other officers returned to the room, Euergetes gave orders that his four finest horses from Cyrene should be led before noonday to his friend Publius Cornelius Scipio, in token of his affection and respect. Then he suffered himself to be dressed, and went to Aristarchus with whom he sat down to work at his studies.

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## CHAPTER XIV.

THE temple of Serapis lay in restful silence, enveloped in darkness, which so far hid its four wings from sight as to give it the aspect of a single rocklike mass wrapped in purple mist.

Outside the temple precincts too all had been still; but just now a clatter of hoofs and rumble of wheels was audible through the silence, otherwise so profound that it seemed increased by every sound. Before the vehicle which occasioned this disturbance had reached the temple, it stopped; just outside the sacred acacia grove, for the neighing of a horse was now audible in that direction.

It was one of the king's horses that neighed; Lysias, the Greek, tied him up to a tree by the road at the edge of the grove, flung his mantle over the loins of the smoking beast; and feeling

his way from tree to tree soon found himself by the Well of the Sun where he sat down on the margin.

Presently from the East came a keen, cold breeze, the harbinger of sunrise; the grey gloaming began by degrees to pierce and part the tops of the tall trees, which, in the darkness, had seemed a compact black roof. The crowing of cocks rang out from the courtyard of the temple, and, as the Corinthian rose with a shiver to warm himself by a rapid walk backwards and forwards, he heard a door creak near the outer wall of the temple, of which the outline now grew sharper and clearer every instant in the growing light.

He now gazed with eager observation down the path which, as day approached, stood out with increasing clearness from the surrounding shades, and his heart began to beat faster as he perceived a figure approaching the well, with rapid steps. It was a human form that advanced towards him—only one—no second figure accompanied it; but it was not a man—

no, a woman in a long robe. Still, she for whom he waited was surely smaller than the woman, who now came near to him. Was it the elder and not the younger sister, whom alone he was anxious to speak with, who came to the well this morning?

He could now distinguish her light foot-fall—now she was divided from him by a young acacia shrub which hid her from his gaze—now she set down two water-jars on the ground—now she briskly lifted the bucket and filled the vessel she held in her left hand—now she looked towards the eastern horizon, where the dim light of dawn grew broader and brighter, and Lysias thought he recognised Irene—and now—Praised be the gods! he was sure; before him stood the younger and not the elder sister; the very maiden whom he sought.

Still half concealed by the acacia shrub, and in a soft voice so as not to alarm her, he called Irene's name, and the poor child's blood froze with terror, for never before had she been startled by a man here, and at this hour. She

stood as if rooted to the spot, and, trembling with fright, she pressed the cold, wet, golden jar, sacred to the god, closely to her bosom.

Lysias repeated her name, a little louder than before, and went on, but in a subdued voice:

“Do not be frightened, Irene; I am Lysias, the Corinthian—your friend, whose pomegranate blossom you wore yesterday, and who spoke to you after the procession. Let me bid you good morning!”

At these words the girl let her left hand fall by her side, still holding the jar, and pressing her right hand on her heart, she exclaimed, drawing a deep breath:

“How dreadfully you frightened me! I thought some wandering soul was calling me that had not yet returned to the nether world, for it is not till the sun rises that spirits are scared away.”

“But it cannot scare men of flesh and blood whose purpose is good. I, you may believe me,

would willingly stay with you, till Helios departs again, if you would permit me."

"I can neither permit nor forbid you anything," answered Irene. "But, how came you here at this hour?"

"In a chariot," replied Lysias smiling.

"That is nonsense—I want to know what you came to the Well of the Sun for at such an hour."

"What but for you yourself? You told me yesterday that you were glad to sleep, and so am I; still, to see you once more, I have been only too glad to shorten my night's rest considerably."

"But, how did you know?"

"You yourself told me yesterday at what time you were allowed to leave the temple."

"Did I tell you? Great Serapis! how light it is already. I shall be punished if the water-jar is not standing on the altar by sunrise, and there is Klea's too to be filled."

"I will fill it for you directly—there—that is done; and now I will carry them both for

you to the end of the grove, if you will promise me to return soon, for I have many things to ask you."

"Go on—only go on," said the girl; "I know very little; but ask away, though you will not find much to be made of any answers I can give."

"Oh! yes, indeed, I shall—for instance, if I asked you to tell me all about your parents. My friend Publius, whom you know, and I also have heard how cruelly and unjustly they were punished, and we would gladly do much to procure their release."

"I will come—I will be sure to come," cried Irene loudly and eagerly, "and shall I bring Klea with me? She was called up in the middle of the night by the gate-keeper, whose child is very ill. My sister is very fond of it, and Philo will only take his medicine from her. The little one had gone to sleep in her lap, and his mother came and begged me to fetch the water for us both. Now give me the jars, for none but we may enter the temple."

"There they are. Do not disturb your sister on my account in her care of the poor little boy, for I might indeed have one or two things to say to you which she need not hear, and which might give you pleasure. Now, I am going back to the well, so farewell! But do not let me have to wait very long for you." He spoke in a tender tone of entreaty, and the girl answered low and rapidly as she hurried away from him:

"I will come when the sun is up."

The Corinthian looked after her till she had vanished within the temple, and his heart was stirred—stirred as it had not been for many years. He could not help recalling the time when he would tease his younger sister, then still quite a child, putting her to the test by asking her, with a perfectly grave face, to give him her cake or her apple which he did not really want at all. The little one had almost always put the thing he asked for to his mouth with her tiny hands, and then he had often felt exactly as he felt now.

Irene too was still but a child, and no less guileless than his darling in his own home; and just as his sister had trusted him—offering him the best she had to give—so this simple child trusted him; him, the profligate Lysias, before whom all the modest women of Corinth cast down their eyes, while fathers warned their growing-up sons against him; trusted him with her virgin self—nay, as he thought, her sacred person.

“I will do thee no harm, sweet child!” he murmured to himself, as he presently turned on his heel to return to the well. He went forward quickly at first, but after a few steps he paused before the marvellous and glorious picture that met his gaze. Was Memphis in flames? Had fire fallen to burn up the shroud of mist which had veiled his way to the temple?

The trunks of the acacia-trees stood up like the blackened pillars of a burning city, and behind them the glow of a conflagration blazed high up to the heavens. Beams of violet and gold

slipped and sparkled between the boughs, and danced among the thorny twigs, the white racemes of flowers, and the tufts of leaves with their feathery leaflets; the clouds above were fired with tints more pure and tender than those of the roses with which Cleopatra had decked herself for the banquet.

Not like this did the sun rise in his own country! Or, was it perhaps only that in Corinth or in Athens at break of day, as he staggered home drunk from some feast, he had looked more at the earth than at the heavens?

His horses began now to neigh loudly as if to greet the steeds of the coming Sun-god. Lysias hurried to them through the grove, patted their shining necks with soothing words, and stood looking down at the vast city at his feet, over which hung a film of violet mist—at the solemn Pyramids, over which the morning glow flung a gay robe of rose-colour—on the huge temple of Ptah, with the great colossi in front of its pylons—on the Nile, mirroring the glory of the sky, and on the limestone hills behind the

villages of Babylon and Troy, about which he had, only yesterday, heard a Jew at the king's table relating a legend current among his countrymen, to the effect that these hills had been obliged, to give up all their verdure to grace the mounts of the sacred city Hierosolyma.

The rocky cliffs of this barren range glowed at this moment like the fire in the heart of the great ruby which had clasped the festal robe of King Euergetes across his bull-neck, as it reflected the shimmer of the tapers; and Lysias saw the day-star rising behind the range with blinding radiance, shooting forth rays like myriads of golden arrows, to rout and destroy his foe, the darkness of night.

Eos, Helios, Phœbus Apollo—these had long been to him no more than names, with which he associated certain phenomena, certain processes and ideas; for he—when he was not luxuriating in the bath, amusing himself in the gymnasium, at cock- or quail-fights, in the theatre or at Dionysiac processions—was wont

to exercise his wits in the Schools of the Philosophers, so as to be able to shine in bandying words at entertainments; but to-day, and face to face with this sunrise, he believed as in the days of his childhood—he saw in his mind's eye the god riding in his golden chariot, and curbing his foaming steeds, his shining train floating lightly round him, bearing torches or scattering flowers—he threw up his arms with an impulse of devotion, praying aloud:

“To-day I am happy and light of heart. To thy presence do I owe this, O! Phœbus Apollo, for thou art light itself. Oh! let thy favours continue—”

But he here broke off in his invocation, and dropped his arms, for he heard approaching footsteps. Smiling at his childish weakness—for such he deemed it that he should have prayed—and yet content from his pious impulse, he turned his back on the sun, now quite risen, and stood face to face with Irene who called out to him:

“I was beginning to think that you had got

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out of patience and had gone away, when I found you no longer by the well. That distressed me—but you were only watching Helios rise. I see it every day, and yet it always grieves me to see it as red as it was to-day, for our Egyptian nurse used to tell me that when the east was very red in the morning it was because the sun-god had slain his enemies, and it was their blood that coloured the heavens, and the clouds and the hills."

"But you are a Greek," said Lysias, "and you must know that it is Eos that causes these tints when she touches the horizon with her rosy fingers before Helios appears. Now to-day you are, to me, the rosy dawn presaging a fine day."

"Such a ruddy glow as this," said Irene, "forebodes great heat, storms, and perhaps heavy rain, so the gate-keeper says; and he is always with the astrologers who observe the stars and the signs in the heavens from the towers near the temple gates. He is poor little Philo's father. I wanted to bring Klea with me,

for she knows more about our parents than I do; but he begged me not to call her away, for the child's throat is almost closed up, and if it cries much the physician says it will choke, and yet it is never quiet but when it is lying in Klea's arms. She is so good—and she never thinks of herself; she has been ever since midnight till now rocking that heavy child on her lap."

"We will talk with her presently," said the Corinthian. "But to-day it was for your sake that I came; you have such merry eyes, and your little mouth looks as if it were made for laughing, and not to sing lamentations. How can you bear being always in that shut up dungeon with all those solemn men in their black and white robes?"

"There are some very good and kind ones among them. I am most fond of old Krates, he looks gloomy enough at every one else; but with me only he jokes and talks, and he often shows me such pretty and elegantly wrought things."

"Ah! I told you just now you are like the rosy dawn before whom all darkness must vanish."

"If only you could know how thoughtless I can be, and how often I give trouble to Klea, who never scolds me for it, you would be far from comparing me with a goddess. Little old Krates, too, often compares me to all sorts of pretty things, but that always sounds so comical that I cannot help laughing. I had much rather listen to you when you flatter me."

"Because I am young and youth suits with youth. Your sister is older, and so much graver than you are. Have you never had a companion of your own age whom you could play with, and to whom you could tell everything?"

"Oh! yes when I was still very young; but since my parents fell into trouble, and we have lived here in the temple, I have always been alone with Klea. What do you want to know about my father?"

"That I will ask you by-and-by. Now only tell me, have you never played at hide and

seek with other girls? May you never look on at the merry doings in the streets at the Dionysiac festivals? Have you ever ridden in a chariot?"

"I daresay I have, long ago—but I have forgotten it. How should I have any chance of such things here in the temple? Klea says it is of no good even to think of them. She tells me a great deal about our parents—how my mother took care of us, and what my father used to say. Has anything happened that may turn out favourably for him? Is it possible that the king should have learned the truth? Make haste and ask your questions at once, for I have already been too long out here."

The impatient steeds neighed again as she spoke, and Lysias, to whom this chat with Irene was perfectly enchanting, but who nevertheless had not for a moment lost sight of his object, hastily pointed to the spot where his horses were standing, and said:

"Did you hear the neighing of those mettlesome horses? They brought me hither, and I

## THE SISTERS.

can guide them well; nay, at the last Isthmian games I won the crown with my own quadriga. You said you had never ridden standing in a chariot. How would you like to try for once how it feels? I will drive you with pleasure up and down behind the grove for a little while."

Irene heard this proposal with sparkling eyes and cried, as she clapped her hands,

"May I ride in a chariot with spirited horses, like the Queen? Oh! impossible! Where are your horses standing?"

In this instant she had forgotten Klea, the duty which called her back to the temple, even her parents, and she followed the Corinthian with winged steps, sprang into the two-wheeled chariot, and clung fast to the breast-work, as Lysias took his place by her side, seized the reins, and with a strong and practised hand curbed the mettle of his spirited steeds.

She stood perfectly guileless and undoubting by his side, and wholly at his mercy as the chariot rattled off; but, unknown to herself, beneficent powers were shielding her with

buckler and armour—her childlike innocence, and that memory of her parents which her tempter himself had revived in her mind, and which soon came back in vivid strength.

Breathing deep with excitement, and filled with such rapture as a bird may feel when it first soars from its narrow nest high up into ether she cried out again and again:

“Oh, this is delightful! this is splendid!” and then—

“How we rush through the air as if we were swallows! Faster, Lysias, faster! No, no—that is too fast; wait a little that I may not fall! Oh, I am not frightened; it is too delightful to cut through the air just as a Nile boat cuts through the stream in a storm, and to feel it on my face and neck.”

Lysias was very close to her; when, at her desire, he urged his horses to their utmost pace, and saw her sway, he involuntarily put out his hand to hold her by the girdle; but Irene avoided his grasp, pressing close against the side of the chariot next her, and every time he

touched her she drew her arm close up to her body, shrinking together like the fragile leaf of a sensitive plant when it is touched by some foreign object.

She now begged the Corinthian to allow her to hold the reins for a little while, and he immediately acceded to her request, giving them into her hand, though, stepping behind her, he carefully kept the ends of them in his own. He could now see her shining hair, the graceful oval of her head, and her white throat eagerly bent forward; an indescribable longing came over him to press a kiss on her head; but he forbore, for he remembered his friend's words that he would fulfil the part of a guardian to these girls. He too would be a protector to her, aye and more than that, he would care for her as a father might. Still, as often as the chariot jolted over a stone, and he touched her to support her, the suppressed wish revived, and once when her hair was blown quite close to his lips he did indeed kiss it—but only as a friend or a brother might. Still, she must have felt the

breath from his lips, for she turned round hastily, and gave him back the reins; then, pressing her hand to her brow, she said in a quite altered voice—not unmixed with a faint tone of regret:

“This is not right—please now to turn the horses round.”

Lysias, instead of obeying her, pulled at the reins to urge the horses to a swifter pace, and before he could find a suitable answer, she had glanced up at the sun, and pointing to the east she exclaimed:

“How late it is already! what shall I say if I have been looked for, and they ask me where I have been so long? Why don’t you turn round — nor ask me anything about my parents?”

The last words broke from her with vehemence, and as Lysias did not immediately reply nor make any attempt to check the pace of the horses, she herself seized the reins **exclaiming**:

“Will you turn round or no?”

"No!" said the Greek with decision.  
"But—"

"And is this what you intended!" shrieked the girl, beside herself. "You meant to carry me off by stratagem—but wait, only wait—"

And before Lysias could prevent her she had turned round, and was preparing to spring from the chariot as it rushed onwards; but her companion was quicker than she; he clutched first at her robe and then her girdle, put his arm round her waist, and in spite of her resistance pulled her back into the chariot.

Trembling, stamping her little feet and with tears in her eyes, she strove to free her girdle from his grasp; he, now bringing his horses to a standstill, said kindly but earnestly:

"What I have done is the best that could happen to you, and I will even turn the horses back again if you command it, but not till you have heard me; for when I got you into the chariot by stratagem it was because I was afraid that you would refuse to accompany me,

and yet I knew that every delay would expose you to the most hideous peril. I did not indeed take a base advantage of your father's name, for my friend Publius Scipio, who is very influential, intends to do everything in his power to procure his freedom and to reunite you to him. But, Irene, that could never have happened if I had left you where you have hitherto lived."

During this discourse the girl had looked at Lysias in bewilderment, and she interrupted him with the exclamation:

"But I have never done anyone an injury! Who can gain any benefit by persecuting a poor creature like me!"

"Your father was the most righteous of men," replied Lysias, "and nevertheless he was carried off into torments like a criminal. It is not only the unrighteous and the wicked that are persecuted. Have you ever heard of King Euergetes, who, at his birth, was named the 'well-doer,' and who has earned that of the 'evil-doer' by his crimes? He has heard that

you are fair, and he is about to demand of the High Priest that he should surrender you to him. If Asklepiodorus agrees—and what can he do against the might of a king—you will be made the companion of flute-playing girls and painted women, who riot with drunken men at his wild carousals and orgies, and if your parents found you thus, better would it be for them—”

“Is it true, all you are telling me?” asked Irene with flaming cheeks.

“Yes,” answered Lysias firmly. “Listen Irene—I have a father and a dear mother and a sister, who is like you, and I swear to you by their heads — by those whose names never passed my lips in the presence of any other woman I ever sued to—that I am speaking the simple truth; that I seek nothing but only to save you; that if you desire it, as soon as I have hidden you I will never see you again, terribly hard as that would be to me—for I love you so dearly, so deeply—poor sweet little Irene—as you can never imagine.”

Lysias took the girl's hand, but she withdrew it hastily, and raising her eyes, full of tears, to meet his she said clearly and firmly:

"I believe you, for no man could speak like that and betray another. But how do you know all this? Where are you taking me? Will Klea follow me?"

"At first you shall be concealed with the family of a worthy sculptor. We will let Klea know this very day of all that has happened to you, and when we have obtained the release of your parents then—but—Help us, protecting Zeus! Do you see the chariot yonder? I believe those are the white horses of the Eunuch Eulæus, and if he were to see us here, all would be lost! Hold tight, we must go as fast as in a chariot race.—There, now the hill hides us, and down there, by the little temple of Isis, the wife of your future host is already waiting for you; she is no doubt sitting in the closed chariot near the palm-trees.

"Yes, certainly, certainly, Klea shall hear all,

so that she may not be uneasy about you! I must say farewell to you directly and then, afterwards, sweet Irene, will you sometimes think of the unhappy Lysias; or did Aurora, who greeted him this morning, so bright and full of happy promise, usher in a day not of joy but of sorrow and regret?" The Greek drew rein as he spoke, bringing his horses to a sober pace, and looked tenderly in Irene's eyes. She returned his gaze with heart-felt emotion, but her sunny glance was dimmed with tears.

"Say something," entreated the Greek. "Will you not forget me? And may I soon visit you in your new retreat?"

Irene would so gladly have said yes—and yes again, a thousand times yes; and yet she, who was so easily carried away by every little emotion of her heart, in this supreme moment found strength enough to snatch her hand from that of the Greek, who had again taken it, and to answer firmly:

"I will remember you for ever and ever, but

you must not come to see me till I am once more united to my Klea."

"But Irene, consider, if now—" cried Lysias much agitated.

"You swore to me by the heads of your nearest kin to obey my wishes," interrupted the girl. "Certainly I trust you, and all the more readily because you are so good to me, but I shall not do so any more if you do not keep your word. Look, here comes a lady to meet us who looks like a friend. She is already waving her hand to me. Yes, I will go with her gladly, and yet I am so anxious—so troubled, I cannot tell you—but I am so thankful too! Think of me sometimes, Lysias, and of our journey here, and of our talk, and of my parents. I entreat you, do for them all you possibly can. I wish I could help crying—but I cannot!"

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